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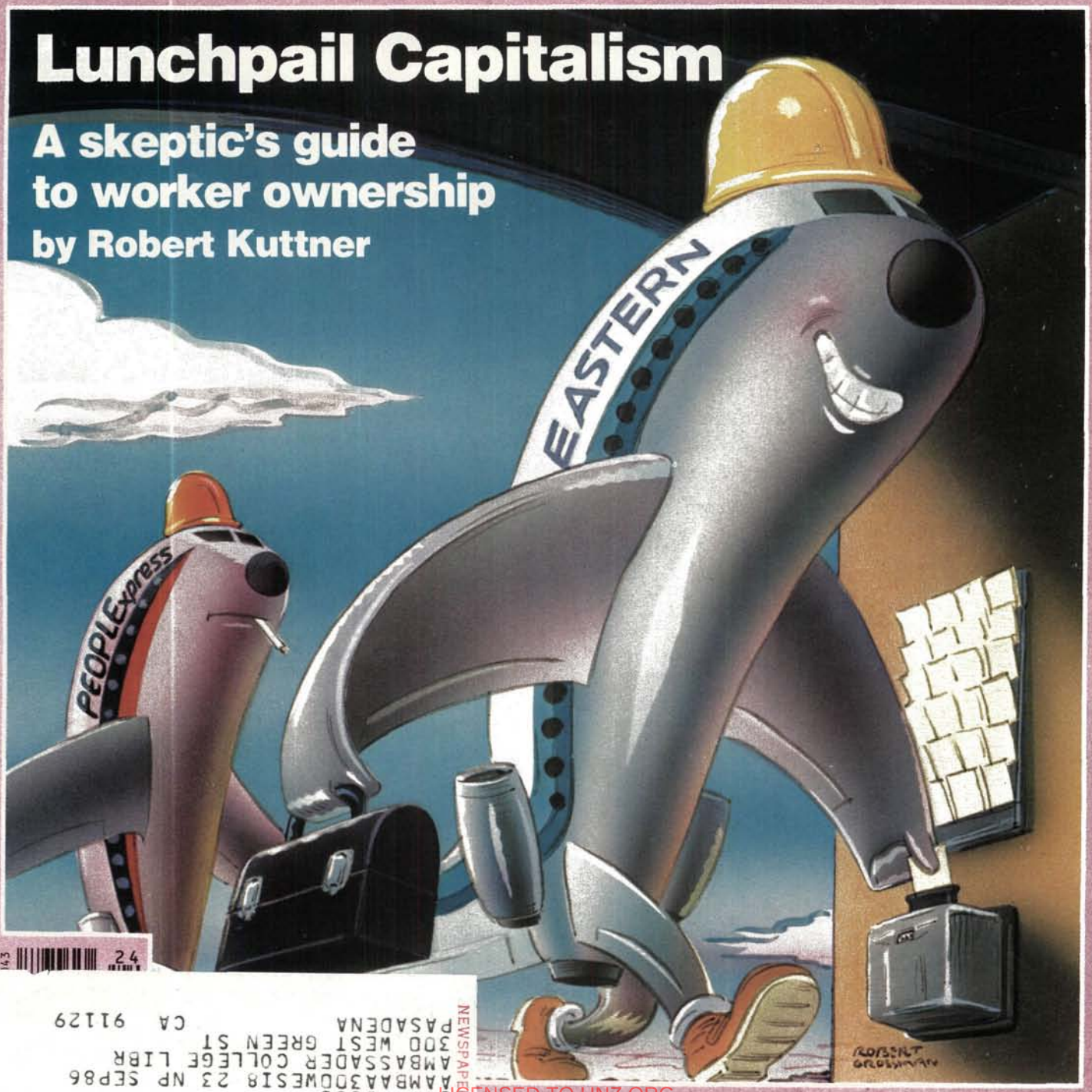
JUN 3 1985

THE NEW REPUBLIC

Lunchpail Capitalism

A skeptic's guide to worker ownership

by Robert Kuttner



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"I think in general, at least for women, relationships and love play too great a role in their lives."

--Cartoonist Lynda Barry, in an interview with co-host Susan Stamberg on National Public Radio's "All Things Considered."

"...the British simply lost the art of cussing a real blue streak." *"The conquering Normans looked down upon the crude Saxons and scorned their language. Then in the 16th century, Henry VIII broke with Rome, and, bit by bit, the British simply lost the art of cussing a real blue streak."*

--National Public Radio's "Morning Edition" commentator John Ciardi, etymologist and poet.

"Now they oppose the humane defense [program] because it is not terrible enough." *"There was a time when... [scientists critical of President Reagan's Star Wars program] opposed the hydrogen bomb because it was too terrible. Now they oppose the humane defense [program] because it is not terrible enough."*

--Physicist Edward Teller, father of the H-bomb, in an interview with co-host Noah Adams on National Public Radio's "All Things Considered."

"...the white male problem..." *"When two or more Democrats get together these days, the conversation quickly turns to what they call the "white male problem"--the fact that Ronald Reagan and Republican candidates all over the country won the overwhelming majority of the votes of white men in the last election."*

--Cokie Roberts, National Public Radio's congressional correspondent.

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--Rock star Little Richard, in an interview with host Bob Edwards, on National Public Radio's "Morning Edition."

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FROM SAN FRANCISCO

THE MYTH OF BOOKS

Seventeen thousand book people are here in San Francisco for the annual convention of the American Booksellers Association, marching this year under the banner "Toward a Reading Society." Fortunately for booksellers, though, their prosperity depends on people buying books, not on people actually reading the bulky things. A report just published by the Book Industry Study Group asserts that half the population reads books, and that "the average book reader read 24.8 books over the six-month period" preceding the survey. Oh, sure. Asking a self-defined "book reader" how many books he's read lately is like asking a teenage boy how far he got on Saturday night.

"Contrary to popular misconceptions," scolds the Book Industry Study Group, "book readers are not withdrawn and solitary, but are involved in many different kinds of activities, including socializing, spending time with the family, going to the theater, and participating in various forms of recreation." Well, that's just the point, isn't it? Where do these dynamos find time to read books? A hint to the solution of this mystery may be found in a footnote to the study, which reveals that "a respondent did not have to read the entire book to consider it a book read."

How true. It has long been my suspicion that, especially in Washington, when people say they have "read" a book, they mean something other than turning every page and attempting to glean meaning from each sentence. I recently organized a small test of this hypothesis. At the beginning of January, my colleague David Bell visited several Washington-area bookstores and surreptitiously slipped a small note into each of about 70 books. The sample included a dozen copies of *Deadly Gambits* by Strobe Talbott, the book about arms control negotiations that Walter Mondale praised extravagantly in one of the Presidential debates. *Deadly Gambits* is 352 pages long, 43 lines a page, about 13 words per line. Mondale ostensibly read it in the middle of his presidential campaign. Other books in the sample included a dozen each of *Double Vision* by Ze'ev Chafets, about how the American press covered the Israeli invasion of Lebanon; and Ben Wattenberg's latest valentine to America, *The Good News Is The Bad News Is Wrong*. These books were not chosen because they are especially boring or unreadable. They're not. They were selected to be representative of the kinds of books Washingtonians are most likely to claim to have read.

The notes were placed about three-quarters of the way through each book, hard against the spine. They could not be shaken out, or observed by flipping through, but they would be impossible to miss by anyone who actually opened the book to the page where they were placed. The notes said: "If you find this note before May 1, call David Bell at The New Republic and get a $5 reward," with our phone number. During five months, we didn't get a single response.

Now I don't claim much for this experiment. Conceivably the notes fell out; or the books, though near the top of the pile, were not sold; or people thought it was a joke. As a "control," David also slipped five notes into copies of the latest Len Deighton novel, *Berlin Game*, and we didn't hear from them either.

Still, unlike the Book Industry Study Group, I have backed up my survey with a few in-depth interviews of typical Washington "book readers." I asked a writer on defense issues, for example, "Have you read *Deadly Gambits*?" He said, "Of course."

I pressed further, "Have you really read the whole thing?" He frowned. "I wouldn't say I've read it cover-to-cover, but I've read large chunks of it." And what about Jean-Francois Revel's *How Democracies Perish*? "I've written about that!" he said indignantly. "It's brilliant."

Yes, but have you *read* it—every word? "Well, I mean, it's not the kind of book you do that, is it?"

This typical respondent has stumbled on a central truth about a certain kind of book: the big nonfiction current events chronicle or policy tome or political memoir. These books don't exist to be read. They exist to be gazed at, browsed through, talked about. They

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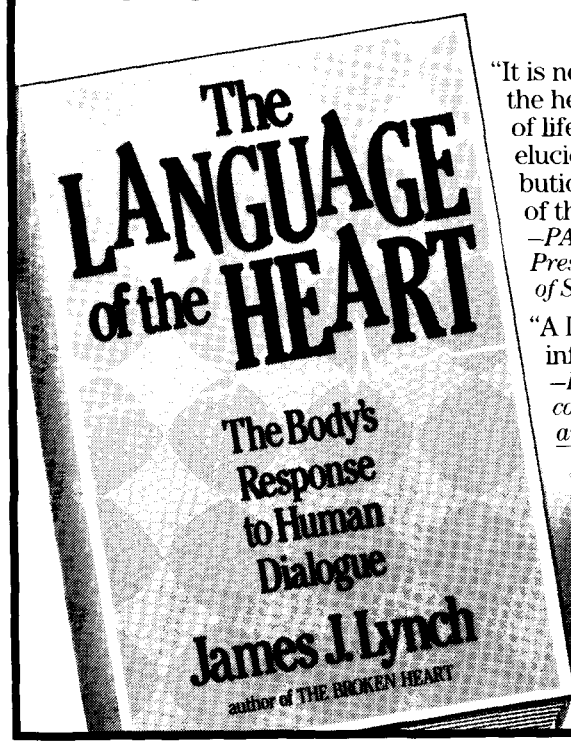
"Lynch's vision is creative and stimulating...."

a compelling case for the effects of human interrelatedness on health."
—*Washington Post*



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CORRESPONDENCE

FAT-CAT FIGHTS

To the editors:

I have no objection if Robert Kuttner wants to take the position ("Ass Backward," April 22) that people like me who have, among other things, raised money for the Democratic Party are evil. I do think that people reading the article are entitled to the factual statements being a bit more accurate. Kuttner said I threw the McGovern list out the window because I wanted to build a party dependent on my network of wealthy contributors. The simple truth is, one of the first things I did in 1972 was to call George McGovern and request his donor list, which he was kind enough to furnish. I used the list and it was productive. You don't need to believe Kuttner or me—ask George McGovern.

When I became treasurer in 1970, I inherited a ten million dollar debt, made up of monthly operating losses plus millions of dollars of unpaid presidential campaign debts of Hubert Humphrey and Bobby Kennedy. As party treasurer, I sought money from large and small donors alike to help rebuild the party and substantially reduce the old debt. These efforts were successful. As to the allegation that I sought only large donors, I went to several well-to-do supporters of the party who joined me in underwriting two telethons, one when I was treasurer and one when I was chairman, that made a profit in excess of three million dollars from small contributors. The record will reflect that we had a strong, active, profitable direct mail program for the first time in the history of the Democratic Party, and that it financially carried the successful 1976 campaign. You don't have to believe Kuttner or me, just ask Senator Edward Kennedy or the late Senator Humphrey's representatives.

In fairness and with some arrogance, I must say that Kuttner is correct when he describes me as a millionaire. Happily, that was the case long before I came to Washington. Many years ago Helen and I had it the other way, and believe me, this way is better.

Unhappily, there are far too many people writing about what is wrong with the Democratic Party today and too few defending it. My experience has been that the people in the leadership—some influential, others not—all give a damn about the party and the country, and give of themselves and their means to help them both.

ROBERT S. STRAUSS
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:

At first I groaned over the headline "Ass Backward" on Robert Kuttner's story. But then I realized you were referring to the logic of the piece rather than to the Democratic Party. Kuttner, a good reporter, got many of the facts straight; he just chose to gloss over and ignore the most important ones, slipping into paragraph 40 the most revealing information in the entire piece: "In 1980 about four-fifths of the Democratic National Committee's gross income was fat-cat and PAC money. Today more than half is small money." So how, in paragraph four, could he rush to tell us that Democrats have been "pushed . . . further into the arms of big money"?

Throughout the piece, Kuttner seems to be arguing that fund-raising by the Democratic Party among the rich and powerful is moving us away from our "natural identity as the party of the non-rich." If you follow that logic, then as recently as a decade ago—when the national party was funded almost 100 percent by big donors—Democratic registration must have been a prerequisite for membership in every country club.

The reality is that our move to the middle has been caused by nothing more insidious than forces ranging from those fat-cat, neoliberal editors of TNR to millions of Joe Six-Pacs, single-member political action committees who acted at the ballot box when Ronald Reagan labeled us a party strong on welfare queens and weak on defense.

TERRY MICHAEL
DNC Press Spokesman
Washington, D.C.

Robert Kuttner replies:

My story was mainly about the Democratic Party's plight—a populist party in a system where big money talks—not about good intentions. The party is in-

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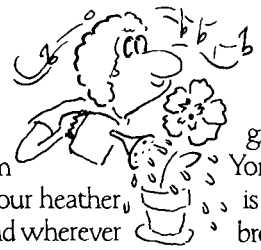
Water Music



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THE NEW REPUBLIC
JUNE 17, 1985

THE TAX REFORM TANGLE

President John F. Kennedy, for all his charm and political skill, had no more success at reforming the federal tax system than he had at the Bay of Pigs. President Jimmy Carter was less of a charmer, but he took the trouble to study tax regulations, and made overhauling the complicated and unfair tax code a major campaign issue. But he too was a breathtaking failure at tax reform. From time to time in recent decades, the Treasury Department and Congress have pushed for tax reform, with little success.

President Reagan, Donald Regan, and Pat Buchanan, please take note of this history. There is more involved in tax reform than crafting a proposal with neopopulist talking points (the $2,000 personal exemption, more taxation of business), appeasing a few special interests, and putting the Great Communicator before TV cameras. Tax reform of the kind worth enacting—with lower rates, few deductions, and all income treated roughly the same—will take enormous personal effort and superhuman political will.

Yet Reagan and his lieutenants act as if this is just another piece of legislation, one that gives the president something upbeat to talk about after the unpleasantness over the budget and aid to the *contras*. True, in Reagan's television address he did denounce "special privileges that are economically unjustifiable," and declared that "the free rides are over." And excursions to Williamsburg, Virginia; Oshkosh, Wisconsin; and Malvern, Pennsylvania, gave him attractive stages for promoting reform. But is the president willing to sustain this pace week after week until a bill hits his desk in the Oval Office?

The political task of achieving tax reform cannot be overestimated. Even Reagan's watered-down version of the elegant and fair proposal issued by his own Treasury Department last fall (Treasury I) is the biggest threat to special interests in decades. The oil and gas crowd, the real estate lobby, the insurance industry, the smokestack types, and the timber boys are beside themselves. And when they get whipped up, the White House and Congress often respond.

Reagan already has, and he enters the tax fight with two strikes against him. First, when devising its proposal, the administration shunned key Democrats such as Senator Bill Bradley and Representative Daniel Rostenkowski, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, and the plan now lacks bipartisan support. Second, the administration sent exactly the wrong signal to the special interests. Treasury Secretary James A. Baker III tried to satisfy some of them with concessions. Venture capitalists were rewarded with a capital gains rate that is lower than the current one. For the oil and gas folks, the elimination of tax advantages envisioned in the initial Treasury proposal was partially reversed. The administration may attempt to defend both concessions on economic grounds, but their political impact is unequivocally harmful. They whetted the appetite of every interest group for keeping its cherished tax breaks. Buying off special interests worked marvelously in 1981 when Reagan wanted a tax cut, but in the tax reform game the organized interests are adversaries, not potential allies.

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As we understand it, the administration is operating on the naive assumption that the congressional tax-writing committees will scrape away the special-interest barnacles from tax reform legislation. Yet nowhere in Congress do special interests have more influence than on the House Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Finance Committee. There is always a moment of truth in a tax fight. In 1981 it came when Rostenkowski and the Democrats started to outbid Reagan in promising tax advantages for interest group after interest group—energy, trucking, electric power, etc. Reagan could have stuck with his clean bill (a 25 percent tax cut for individuals plus faster depreciation for business) and fought the tax giveaways. But he panicked and outbid Rostenkowski, turning the tax bill into a special-interest hodgepodge. As a consequence, the deficit grew larger still. It remains to be seen whether this time around Reagan will summon the will to resist.

What about the Democrats? Bradley, the most enthusiastic tax reformer among Democrats, insists that his party is in a no-lose situation so long as it presses for reform. Either the Democrats get the issue back from Reagan or they share in the credit for passage of tax reform. Sure, Reagan will benefit politically if tax reform succeeds. But what if it is Democrats who block Reagan from appeasing business groups and shifting the tax burden back toward individuals? This isn't as hard as it sounds. They could embrace Treasury I as their own; indeed, some are considering exactly this. They might find a surprising ally in Rostenkowski. In his nationally televised response to Reagan, he said the administration's bill is only "a starting point. We will make some changes, correct some imbalances, seek to make it fairer." It wouldn't take many changes to fashion Reagan's bill into something resembling Treasury I. If the Democrats manage this, they will shoulder their way into the heart of a grateful nation, and Ronald Reagan will just have to move aside and, for once, share center stage.

BLOOD BROTHERS

It is Ramadan in the world of Islam, and the faithful are fasting from dawn to dusk. But if it is a time for transcendence, it is also a time for killing. In Kuwait an aborted assassination of that country's ruling sheikh took the lives of several bystanders instead. At far greater human cost, Iraq and Iran marked the first week of the holy month by exchanging air strikes against each other's cities, without even much of a pretense of aiming at military targets. No surprise: the distinction between armed concentrations and civilian areas is not much honored in the Arab ambit. But the fastings of Ramadan in Lebanon—where the idea that there is a moral line separating combatants from noncombatants was last mustered in propaganda exercises against Israel—could only have appeased the gods of bloodlust. Beirut is once again the site of ethnic and sectarian violence so savage that one wonders whether anyone ever again will test our indulgence and invoke "the unity of the Arab nation" as a reality of Middle Eastern political life.

Dismembered Lebanon is merely a case in extremis of the violent fractiousness of Arab politics. It is also the graveyard of that widely held delusion that even antagonistic Arabs are united behind the Palestinian grievance against Israel. It is true that every Arab state has exploited that grievance to further its own particular interest (most telling are Syria and Jordan today, and not so long ago Egypt, staking out long-range claims to the territory of what is usually called the Palestinian homeland), or to use as an instrument in its rivalry with other Arab states. And they all have wanted something from Israel—primarily that it not exist. What they have never wanted was genuine self-determination for the Palestinian Arabs, whose assertion of a distinct national identity mystifies them as much as it alarms them. No Arab state or Arab faction has ever decisively come to the aid of the Palestinians when their fate has been held in the balance.

Aside from the endemic cynicism of the Arab body politic, one reason this is so is that successive Palestinian leaderships have never been alert to the limits of their situation or to its opportunities, however frustratingly incomplete. The idea of compromise with the Zionists never seems to have crossed their minds. What's more, they have imperiled their hosts and such allies as they had, and in consequence brought ruin on themselves and their people. This is especially characteristic of Yasir Arafat's stewardship of the Palestinian revanche; and it is a measure of how his people have not yet internalized the discipline of realism, of how they are easily mesmerized by slogan and fantasy, that he has succeeded in holding sway even over many of those to whom he has brought untold misery.

IN LEBANON, since the beginning of Ramadan, Arafat has brought down on the hapless refugees of Sabra, Shatila, and Burj al Brajneh the armed ire of Amal, the mainstream Shiite militia, and of the Shiite-dominated Sixth Brigade, masked as an army unit of a nonexistent Lebanese sovereignty. With a fierce reciprocal indifference to the minimal constraints of the rules of war, the Shiite forces and an ersatz army of pro-Arafat and pro-Syrian Palestinian militias (which only months ago were engaged in a fratricide whose heavy cost was borne mostly by civilians) were battering each other so relentlessly that, watching from afar, many Israelis were doubtless muttering, "Imagine their savagery if they had half a chance against us." But this savagery, for which a clear green light came from Syria, was between "brothers," that unctuous term which in Arabic political rhetoric means tomorrow's enemies. If we are to believe eyewitness accounts, Shiite and Palestinian militiamen have dragged each other's wounded civilians and soldiers out of hospitals and shot them in the head or slit their throats "like sheep."

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To the Western political intelligence, the Lebanese bloodlettings defy rational explanation. The shifts in alliances, the dizzying pace of the kill, kiss-and-make-up, kill-again routines are not of our ken. Still, they have a certain intrinsic logic. Some weeks ago the soldiers of the Maronite Lebanese Front put Sidon under siege, not a readily comprehensible move, certainly not militarily. A reporter asked a canny Israeli intelligence officer why the Christians had done it. "Because they had the weapons," he answered. The Shiites had greater justification for their siege. First of all, they feared the vengeance that the re-arming of Palestinians in Beirut augured for them, in retribution for the inconstancy of their fidelity to the Palestinian revolution. With God only knows whose mischievous money, Arafat had again become paymaster to thousands of Palestinian young men in Beirut; the threat was real. The Shiites were not about to countenance the reestablishment of Palestinian dominion in the south, which had robbed them of their civil authority and further degraded their economic and social status. And if they say they fear Israeli retaliation for what the Palestinians might start up again from the Shiite hearth, they fear more the Palestinians themselves. The Shiite war on the Palestinians is preemptive war, brutal preemptive war.

EVERY OTHER PLAYER in the country is at the usual Lebanese game: keeping the other players at virulent odds with each other. The master player is Syria's president, Hafez al-Assad, the reasonable statesman of Jimmy Carter's silly little chapbook on the Arab-Israeli conflict, *The Blood of Abraham*. Sworn opponent of Arafat, Assad nonetheless threw into battle on Arafat's side the various Palestinian units, which look to Damascus for orders, for equipment, and for pay. Still, he did nothing to interpose the overwhelming Syrian force present against the Shiite offensive, even when it was ravaging Arafat's own private hirelings, Abu Musa's units. At a certain point, when all the Palestinians are sufficiently humbled, Assad may well intervene definitively to keep Nabih Berri of the Amal from excessively grand ideas. Berri last week told a television interviewer that there have already been several Syrian attempts on his life.

Still, such grand ideas are inevitable. It is Shiite ambitions—the ambitions of the largest and least entitled sect—that upset everyone else, but especially the entrenched Sunni oligarchy, the pillars of the venal status quo ante. It is they, moreover, who have most egregiously welcomed the Syrian boot on the face of Lebanon, although it was Maronite supplication that first brought Syrian troops into the country. It is the Sunnis, then, who, as Professor Clinton Bailey of Tel Aviv University put it, are "scheduled to lose no matter how the cake is cut." And lose they surely will; the Syrians are also not faithful allies.

Meanwhile, Lebanon's weakling president, Amin Gemayel, has surprised nearly everyone in showing just how craven Lebanon's epic proud Christians can be. In return for Christian deference, Syria is reassuring them at the expense of the Sunnis, and is receiving payment in full. Christian troops have been shelling the Shiites, who have been shelling the Palestinians, whom only a short time ago the Christians had been shelling. Even the soldiers of the hard-line Phalange, specialists in murdering civilians, have given obeisance to Assad; and Elie Hobeika, the executioner of Sabra and Shatila, is once again welcome in what goes for respectable company in Beirut. The price of admission: a repudiation of Maronite ties to Israel. You may soon see, mirabile dictu, an alliance between the bulk of the Christians and the Palestinians; the dazzlingly corrupt Franjieh clan of Maronites long ago pioneered this peculiar political formation.

The Druse have also been heard from. They have been shelling the embattled Shiites, their putative allies, but, like the Christians thus far, are doing so more as a symbolic representation than as a military tactic. The Druse fear the Shiite ascendancy, but they also fear a Palestinian reentrenchment, which is why blood has flown between them and the Murabitoun, the militia of pro-Palestinian Sunnis, enemies on many other counts.

IN THE SHORT RUN, all of this fighting strengthens Syria's position in Lebanon; and the depth of its ruthlessness has not yet been plumbed. As yet it's only the locals who have been playing by the "Hama rules," named after the Syrian city where in 1982 a bloody massacre of tens of thousands quieted civic unrest. Just wait until the rules are played by the folk who invented them, which is what will happen if any indigenous Lebanese take to remembering that the withdrawal of the Israelis was supposed to be followed by the restoration of Lebanon's independence.

The Lebanese wars have not been easy to follow, perhaps primarily because the war plans have been so confusing. Another reason is that there is hardly a Western reporter left in Lebanon. This may partly explain why the reprise in Sabra and Shatila has provoked so little outrage in the media. What we are getting from the war zone is reports from Arab stringers, honest and dignified professionals many of them, but terrified men and women too. And terrified by very nearly the same fears that drove Western reporters out of the country in the first place. For years we have pointed to the phenomenon of censorship by terror, an unacknowledged, permanent fact in the Arab world vehemently denied by journalists stationed there. Now we have a form of censorship by mass abandonment. But which press combines have let on, in anything more than a cryptic aside, that fear has again crippled their independent news-gathering capacities? When the CBS camera crew was inadvertently shot up by the Israelis, no CBS journalists on the ground were Americans. Their places had been taken by people who know in the most intimate way what may be in store—kidnapping, maiming, or death—for those who reveal too much of the ugly truths unfolding in a country that, alas, is no more.

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NOTEBOOK

□ LOCAL BOYS MAKE GOOD: TNR senior editor Charles Krauthammer has won first place in the print-magazine category of People For The American Way's First Amendment Journalism Awards. The prize was for his essay "America's Holy Wars," which appeared in our issue of April 9, 1984. Former literary editor Roger Rosenblatt, now a senior writer at *Time*, has won the 1984 George Foster Peabody Award for his essays and commentary on "The MacNeil-Lehrer News Hour." Contributing editor Robert B. Reich is co-author (along with John D. Donohue) of *New Deals: The Chrysler Revival and the American System*, just out from Times Books.

□ WHOOPS: TRB last week accused President Reagan of selling out tax reform. One example was Reagan's reported decision to save money by phasing in an increase in the personal exemption rather than phasing in a tax rate cut for corporations. TRB relied on *The New York Times*, which relied on "a senior administration official," who turned out to be wrong. Reagan's final proposal would institute both of these changes immediately. The general accusation, however, remains true. (See our lead editorial in this issue.)

□ FROM TWILIGHT ZONE TO ENTERPRISE ZONE: According to *Variety*, Hollywood has applied to be designated an "enterprise zone" under a California law giving special tax breaks and other favors to certain communities deemed to be worthy of special economic help. The motion picture industry is lobbying to have the application accepted. President Reagan and many other politicians across the political spectrum favor a national enterprise zone system as a way to help economically depressed areas. Critics contend that there is no way special government favors can be doled out to just a few places without everyone demanding a share. If Hollywood qualifies as an "enterprise zone," can Beverly Hills be far behind?

□ BUENOS DÍAS: Radio Marti, the American propaganda broadcasting program aimed at Cuba, took to the airwaves at the end of May. Fidel Castro immediately retaliated by closing off emigration from Cuba to the United States, and some people (the editors of *The New York Times*, for example) are accusing the Reagan administration of needlessly exacerbating tensions, and so forth. Oh, heck. We believe the battle of words is one the United States should never be reluctant to join. In fact, let's make Castro a deal. If he'll agree to stop jamming Radio Marti, we'll give him the equipment and the necessary spectrum space to broadcast anything he wishes into the United States. Some of his own four-hour speeches, for example. What could be fairer than that? Even so, this is a battle we can't lose.

□ BAD NEWS: In 1968 the poorest fifth of the population had 91 percent of the income necessary to meet their basic needs. In 1983 the figure was 60 percent. This from a new study by the Congressional Budget Office and the Congressional Research Service. About a fifth of all children, a third of Hispanic children, and almost half of all black children live in poverty. All these figures are up in recent years. The study points out that a smaller proportion of poor children were getting government welfare benefits in 1983, after the Reagan revolution, than previously. It also suggests that poverty may be more impervious than before to the right's preferred solution of economic growth. This by no means settles the debate, set off by Charles Murray's book *Losing Ground*, about whether social welfare programs are good or bad for their intended beneficiaries. But the figures do make that debate rather more urgent.

□ SILVER LINING DEPARTMENT: From *The Miami Herald*, April 27.

HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS' CONVENTION COMING

America's Holocaust survivors have decided to hold their 1987 nationwide gathering in Miami Beach, a place where thousands of survivors have gathered and settled for years. . . .

The city expects the assembly to be an economic boon . . . with an estimated 20,000 survivors and relatives spending four days to a week or more in the area. The city's biggest convention in recent years, the American Heart Association gathering last fall, drew 17,000 visitors.

"We are a convention city. That's our industry," said [Vice Mayor Ben] Grenald, 65, who lost aunts, uncles, grandparents and cousins in the Holocaust, which claimed an estimated six million Jewish victims. "I think it's a big plus for the city."

At this month's meeting of the city's Visitor and Convention authority, member Les Feldman voiced concern about such an assembly in Miami Beach. Since the city wants to project a more youthful, dynamic image, Feldman wondered whether the event might "signal a different concept of this area than we are trying to communicate". . . . "It's something I'm concerned about," he said Friday. "We're trying to suggest we have a more vibrant community."

□ FIFTY YEARS AGO IN THE NEW REPUBLIC: "One of the editors of this paper who Gets Around a Good Deal reports his impression that since the repeal of prohibition there has been a sharp increase in public drunkenness. . . . His impression is borne out to some extent by statistics of automobile accidents; there is an increase in the number of such accidents in which alcohol is a factor, and a sharp increase in those with fatal results. This might result from an actual growth of drinking, or might be caused by the different circumstances under which people nowadays imbibe. During prohibition many individuals drank at home, and stayed there until the effects wore off. If they frequented speakeasies, they were perhaps more cautious than today." (The Editors, "The Week," June 19, 1935.)

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WHITE HOUSE WATCH

THE CURSE OF AIDES

LET'S REVIEW for a moment the record of the current administration. Budget director David Stockman brought us the supposedly sweeping budget cuts of 1981, and James A. Baker III, then White House chief of staff, won Senate approval of the sale of AWACS radar planes to Saudi Arabia. A band of supply-siders, some at the Treasury Department, some in Congress, were responsible for the deep tax cut four years ago. And was it Edward Teller, the H-bomb man, or George Keyworth, the White House science adviser, who got Star Wars adopted as administration policy? Well, it had to be one or the other.

On the other hand, it was Edwin Meese III, then White House counselor, who got the administration into hot water by trying to bestow tax exemptions on segregated private schools. Secretary of State George Shultz gets the blame for sending American forces to Lebanon. And Donald Regan, chief honcho of the White House staff, agreed to a budget that cuts Social Security cost-of-living adjustments, which conflicts with what was promised in the campaign last year. Robert McFarlane, the national security adviser, flubbed on military aid to the *contras* this year, pressing for it at the wrong time. And Michael K. Deaver, in his final days as a White House aide, is the guy who made an appearance at the German military cemetery in Bitburg a matter of high controversy.

Now, anyone but the very slow of wit must have noticed that there's a name missing here: Ronald Reagan. As leader of the Free World, didn't he figure in any of these developments? The answer is yes, but not so you'd notice inside the Beltway. In Washington, Aide Chic prevails—among bureaucrats and lobbyists, conservative zealots and journalists (including me, I confess), Capitol Hill functionaries and party officials. Indeed, whenever two or three political junkies are gathered together, talk turns to aides, particularly White House aides. Who's up? Who's down? Who's got Reagan's ear? Who hasn't? Who's the real architect of this policy or that? How close is so-and-so's office to the Oval Office? And so on.

The fixation on aides would be merely a fatuous pastime if it weren't for the press. Reporters are more obsessive on the subject than anyone else, and story after story dispatched to the outside world reflects this. Major policy decisions—whether, say, to jettison mutually assured destruction and opt for a strategic defense—are treated as a function of who got to Reagan at what time on which day. True, Reagan is not a mother lode of facts and precise analysis on many topics, but he's not quite an empty vessel either. He's the most ideological president of this century (maybe ever), and that should go for something. Usually it doesn't, though, in press coverage.

By dwelling on aides, by portraying their role as ever-pivotal, the press manages to let Reagan off the hook on specific decisions and policies. It's as if he plays no part at all, other than to accumulate the advice of his aides on some issue and, after a robotic calculation, declare one faction or another the winner. The result is that Reagan comes off as merely the conduit through which some course of action is taken. At least there's symmetry in this—he neither gets blamed for decisions that lead to disaster nor credited for those that are successful. This is true as far as it goes, which isn't very. More broadly, Reagan reaps the benefit, in popularity, from the overall success of his administration in providing reasonable economic growth without high inflation and an assertive foreign policy without war. So credit for individual policies that succeed hardly matters. The other half of the symmetry for Reagan is that he isn't tainted by individual policies that don't work. And this does matter.

The curse of aides has grown especially intense lately, because of the troubles that have marked the beginning of Reagan's second term. Thomas M. DeFrank, the respected White House correspondent for *Newsweek*, wrote last month that "political Washington has concluded that the second-term White House operation is suffering from the phenomenon that bedeviled candidate John Glenn in 1984—right stuff, wrong staff—and that Don Regan himself is largely at fault." Regan, of course, became chief of staff last February when he switched jobs with Baker, now treasury secretary. DeFrank went on to zing the Regan team for losing the vote on *contra* aid and putting the president in the dubious position of seeking Social Security cuts. "Reagan may have to be saved from his staff rather than himself," wrote DeFrank.

How could all this trouble have been averted? By sticking with his old staff headed by Baker and Richard Darman, who moved with Baker to Treasury. Critics of Baker & Co. "are now quietly admitting their mistake," noted DeFrank. One particular shortcoming in the Regan operation, he added, is "an absence of strategic planning—one of Darman's fortes." Even the fiasco over the Bitburg cemetery visit allegedly could have been minimized, if only Reagan had stuck with his old aides. Quoting a "senior official," Lou Cannon of *The Washington Post* reported the "widespread view" in Washington that Baker "would have 'undone the Bitburg blunder' within 24 hours of its announcement."

CONSIDER FOR A MINUTE what we're being asked to swallow here. Reagan, a fellow with deep ideological convictions and near-perfect political pitch, is totally, helplessly, hopelessly dependent on having the right collection of aides. With one group, he soars; with another, he plummets. Reagan himself? Why, he's hardly a factor at all. Had this sort of analysis been around in Shakespeare's day, Hamlet and Claudius wouldn't have been central characters; Horatio and Polonius would have.

A striking example of how the Washington press corps's obsession with aides limits Reagan's accountability is the Bitburg controversy. At every juncture, aides took

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the blame. Deaver, who advanced the trip, was singled out for scheduling the cemetery stop in the first place. His excuse that the SS graves were covered with snow the day he reconnoitered the cemetery was brushed aside as laughably inadequate. Patrick J. Buchanan, the White House communications director, was faulted for Reagan's excuse that the German soldiers buried at Bitburg were as much victims of Nazism as were Jews killed in the Holocaust. And Regan was blamed for not instantly smelling trouble and nixing the Bitburg visit. In truth, Reagan was the moving force behind the Bitburg stop. He was persuaded to go there in a personal conversation with German chancellor Helmut Kohl, and it was in subsequent talks with Kohl that he became convinced the visit should not be scrubbed. As the controversy festered, Reagan's popularity sank, but it rebounded quickly upon his return from Europe. And why not? As harmful as the Bitburg mess was, Reagan wasn't regarded as responsible.

Nor was the ill-fated deployment of the Marines in Lebanon his responsibility—that is, if you followed the press accounts. The policy in Lebanon was treated as part of everyone's favorite Washington story, feuding aides. This time, it was Shultz and Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger doing the honors. Their prolonged spat, the source of weighty articles in *The New York Times Magazine* and elsewhere, framed the Lebanon debate: Shultz wanted the troops in, Weinberger didn't. Shultz won the argument, then suffered for it when several hundred Marines were killed. The deaths of the Marines might have caused political repercussions for Reagan last year. Democratic strategists couldn't figure out why it didn't help their party. The reason was that Reagan didn't get the bulk of the blame for the failed policy; Shultz did. If Shultz had been the Republican presidential nominee, he might have lost the election as a consequence. As it was, he didn't even lose his job.

On arms control, the level of responsibility goes even lower than Shultz and Weinberger. It's the two Richards whose feuding is the engine of this policy. Richard Perle, an assistant secretary of defense, is the hard-liner, and Richard Burt, once an assistant secretary of state but now headed to Germany as American ambassador, is the voice of moderation. Depending on who won which argument between the two, such was the arms control policy of the Reagan administration. Or so it's been written, notably by Strobe Talbott of *Time*, in *Deadly Gambits*, the book that Walter Mondale recommended to the world in the second presidential debate last fall.

WHENEVER a new policy is announced or a fresh development occurs in Washington, the press immediately starts playing "find the aide." For example, once it became clear that Reagan was serious about his support for Star Wars, the most pressing question became not "Will it work?" but "Who got to him?" In a lengthy piece *The New York Times* gave considerable credit—or blame, if you prefer—to Edward Teller. *Time* concluded that McFarlane was the key person in creating the new strategic policy. David Hoffman of *The Washington Post*, however, took the unheard-of approach of attributing a major role in Star Wars to Reagan. Hoffman wrote last March that as early as 1979, Reagan had become intrigued by the possibility of a missile defense system. And when advised in March 1983 that Congress would never fund another offensive missile system, he decided to propose Star Wars. "Reagan, who knows relatively little about the complexities of weapons systems but often has been captivated by dramatic ideas," Hoffman said, "thought it was time to put the idea of strategic defense before the American people." Imagine that. The man himself, not some aide, making a pivotal decision.

As you might expect, Reagan's aides discovered early on the political value of transforming themselves into sponges for blame. The more they soak up, the less trouble the president faces. And after Reagan performed badly in the first presidential debate last October, they selflessly and shamelessly exploited the penchant of the political community and the press to concentrate on them instead of Reagan. In the days immediately after the debate, Reagan's mental competence, his health, and his age suddenly came under discussion. And this wasn't part of the Reagan game plan. Then Senator Paul Laxalt, Reagan's horseback riding chum and campaign manager, exclaimed at a press conference that the president had been "brutalized by a briefing process that didn't make any sense." Didn't this have the effect of drawing attention away from Reagan and onto the debate coaches, columnists Jack Germond and Jules Witcover ask Baker in their new book, *Wake Us When It's Over*, on the campaign? Baker smiled at the question. "You've just discovered the secret of the Teflon presidency," he said.

FRED BARNES

How to trim defense's expenses.

BLOAT CONTROL

IF YOU HAVE any taste for variety, it is hard to keep reading about defense. The nominal subject changes—radar-guided missiles one month, attack helicopters the next—but the news is always the same. A military project is launched amid promises of marvelous improvements in performance; it makes its way through the Pentagon's procurement system, all the while acquiring new features and extra costs; and eventually it emerges, tardy by months or years. By this point it costs more than anyone dared predict, can be bought only in tiny quantities and operated only part of the time, and sometimes cannot even do the job that was its original rationale. The major

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source of suspense is waiting to see whether there will be allegations of actual fraud.

Nearly every extensive article about military procurement, including both of the thorough, worthy series recently published in *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*, tries to explain that no one in particular can be blamed for the string of misconceived projects. The procurement problem is more serious than it would be if you could root out the crooks and incompetents and expect the system to work. The system *is* the problem, because its internal incentives encourage precisely the kind of behavior we have resigned ourselves to expect. Bureaucratic, financial, and psychological rewards may be had for defending the Air Force's budget against the Navy's, or selling a new weapon to Congress, or making sure that no base is ever closed. But the military and civilian officials who design, test, sell, and buy our weapons receive practically no reward, at least in peacetime, for saving money or devising Yankee-ingenuity ways to make do.

Most reporters understand this point much more viscerally than they have been able to convey to their readers. Anyone who has covered the military has at some point encountered the impassioned weapons-designer or career soldier who cannot imagine why the system is left to fester undisturbed and who, much more than the reporter and the public, *really cares* about weapons that don't work and companies that don't honestly earn their way. One man, having recounted yet another chronicle of failure, asked me angrily as I sat in his office at a weapons test site: What's so mysterious or hard to explain? What else would you expect when no one has to worry about the bottom line?

In an attempt to change the culture and incentives of the procurement system, certain members of Congress in the last few years have begun shifting their attention away from troubled weapons and toward the culture that produced them. The DIVAD may be a disaster (it is an expensive, automated antiaircraft system that, as Gregg Easterbrook has pointed out in *The Atlantic*, is almost guaranteed to be less effective than weapons aimed and fired by human beings), but by the time anyone finds out, it's really too late. Time and money have already been wasted; the procurement system is hunkered down for a fight. The trick is to change the rules so that the next time the Army wants an antiaircraft system, it will take a different tack.

CARTOON BY BEN SARGENT

EARLY IN MAY the Senate considered a bill that would have tackled many parts of the procurement culture all at once. It would have introduced more competition among bidders, restricted the "revolving door" (which tempts Pentagon officials with the knowledge that tomorrow they may be working for the company whose expense claims they are authorizing today), and made manufacturers more responsible for the cost and quality of their products. The bill, sponsored by Senators David Pryor of Arkansas and Charles Grassley of Iowa, was soon bludgeoned to death. In its place, the Senate adopted a "reform" measure, offered by Senator Dan Quayle of Indiana, which—to put it mildly—was mild. For example, its "revolving door" provision would punish an employee who failed to notify his superior that a contractor had been so overt as to offer him a job—but would allow the employee to accept the job once he retired.

Grassley is now preparing a more focused attack, with his "creeping capitalism" bill. (Grassley has seized the role that someone was destined to fill: the conservative who would preach no-nonsense frugality to the military. The title of his bill is in perfect keeping with that niche.) The "creeping" aspect is a requirement that, each year, the Pentagon expose five percent more of its business to competitive bidding, until it reaches a ceiling of 70 percent. The "capitalism" is a requirement that companies be chosen on the basis of *sealed bids*. Under this plan, when the Air Force wanted a new engine for its jet planes, it would draw up detailed specifications and show them to General Electric and Pratt and Whitney (and anyone else technically qualified to handle the work). The companies would make their best offers, and the Pentagon would take the low bid. It would be like the business world (or at least the way business is supposed to work).

The main objection to the plan concerns the sealed bids. Defense policy is heavily in thrall to respectability—if you want to be in the game, you have to show that you're tough-minded on the big questions—and the respectable point of view is that sealed bids wouldn't work. They would make the procurement process unwieldy(!); they would require the Pentagon to accept cheap, cut-rate work. On such grounds, Representative Les Aspin, the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee and today's definition of respectability, is said by colleagues to have rejected any reform plan that includes sealed bids.

The respectables are wrong. If carried too far, sealed bids could obviously create a problem: you can't draw up plans for a whole aircraft carrier before putting it out for sealed bids. But we are nowhere near that point at the moment. Indeed, the very rigor and "unwieldiness" of the process might prove to be virtues. Under today's system of "negotiated competition," contractors are always coming back to the Pentagon with add-ons and enhancements to weapons

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still under development. Most of the time, these alterations drive up the price and drag out the schedule; they are a major source of "requirements creep," the pattern that makes it so hard to build a weapon quickly and to cost. If military designers were compelled to figure out in advance what capabilities they needed and how much they were willing to pay for them, they would regain control of a process that is now out of everyone's hands.

One other congressional development deserves more attention than it has received. Since Jimmy Carter began increasing defense spending in his last year in office, the only argument in Washington about military spending has been how much to add to last year's total—after allowing for inflation, of course. But according to a careful, important study released late in May by the Military Reform Caucus (an informal bipartisan assemblage now chaired by Representatives Mel Levine and Denny Smith), the inflation "adjustment" has turned into an unintended, unnoticed subsidy.

In many other government programs—Social Security is the most familiar example—inflation adjustments are made after the fact, often with several months' delay. The Pentagon, however, has received prospective inflation reimbursements, based on its estimates of how much its costs are likely to rise. Because of the miracle of compound interest, any inaccuracy in these estimates can have a staggering effect. Suppose this year's inflation adjustment was too generous by ten billion dollars. When next year's budget is prepared, that ten billion dollars becomes part of the base that must itself be "protected" against inflation and given room for "real growth." According to the Reform Caucus report, the overpayments between fiscal years 1982 and 1985 totaled somewhere between $42 billion and $54 billion. Not only is that money gone, but "protecting" the overpayments themselves against inflation will cost between two billion dollars and five billion dollars a year from now on.

The most interesting part of the report is its description of how the overpayments occurred. They were not the accidental results of the administration's great success in controlling inflation, but rather the inescapable and seemingly intended products of its estimating system. For technical reasons too complicated to explain here (the report is available from the office of Representative Levine), the system was arranged so that when the cost of a weapon rose, the increase could be defined as having come from inflation—and therefore reimbursed in full by Congress—rather than from mismanagement, waste, cost overrun, requirements creep, or any other less attractive source. As perverse incentives go, it would be hard to top this one. Congress should change it, by asking for its money back and insisting, as the Caucus recommends, on an annual correction for the previous year's underpayment or overpayment.

JAMES FALLOWS

James Fallows is Washington editor of *The Atlantic* and the author of *National Defense*.

New fears eclipse his political triumph.

DUARTE'S FIX

San Salvador

IN RECENT weeks El Salvador's president, José Napoleón Duarte, has triumphed as never before. In local elections on March 31, his Christian Democratic Party handily beat a coalition of rightist parties, seizing control of the country's legislative assembly, most of the country's 262 town governments, and every other major organ of civilian government except the judiciary. Meanwhile, the guerrillas have blundered their way into political and military reverses unprecedented in the five-year insurgency. Attacking unarmed peasants in La Paz province, razing municipal halls in nearly three dozen villages, executing two town mayors, and kidnapping several others, the insurgents have handed the government a series of unequivocal propaganda victories.

Duarte's fortunes have surged so suddenly, in fact, that they have obscured the continuing limits to his powers as El Salvador's first freely elected civilian president in three generations. The civil war is now five years old, and—Duarte's peacemaking intentions notwithstanding—could last ten. Despite the guerrillas' setbacks (one U.S. military officer estimated that the number of combatants had recently plunged by a third), they still hold the country's battered infrastructure at ransom. And they have begun to take advantage of the *apertura* his government represents by making inroads among unionists, students, and peasants. Meanwhile, the economy would collapse without U.S. aid; and although Duarte's victory has left the far right vanquished and confused, the U.S. Embassy and the military still hold significant power. They can prevent him from negotiating with the guerrillas too generously, pushing his populist economic policies too firmly, or prosecuting political assassins in the military too righteously.

Hours after his March election victory, Duarte announced that he would renew his peace efforts, calling them decisive to the Christian Democratic sweep. In the weeks since, however, he has set no date for the next encounter with the guerrillas, and the future of the dialogue remains in question. The successful first encounter between the guerrillas and the government at La Palma on October 15 was followed by a second ugly, stalemated meeting at the Ayagualo Seminary in late November. Duarte's top aide, Julio Rey Prendes, says the government will not risk another such embarrassment. Hinting at secret dealings, Rey Prendes says—as Duarte did at the White House on May 16—that before any new public dialogue the government will search for common ground with rebel leaders on limited issues in private talks.

The peace talks, of course, are about war, a bloody showdown over which the army is confident as never

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before. The high command is at once flush with new U.S. arms (its fleet of helicopter gunships has more than doubled since Duarte took office) and gleeful over the political ineptitude of the guerrillas' recent return to terror-style tactics. Defense minister General Eugenio Vides Casanova told me that although the army supports Duarte's dialogue efforts, the military he leads hopes to force the guerrillas to make major concessions. "If we act with more military force every day, the subversives will adjust their ideas to reality," Vides said. For their part, the rebels have recently reaffirmed their own faith in a long-term war of attrition, a war increasingly fought by roving terror squads planting Claymore mines and hurling grenades. With the major actors still committed to war, the prospects for negotiated progress appear limited to pacts over "humanization of the war"—the prisoner exchanges and other tactical agreements that only regulate the war's continuation.

FURTHER complicating the prospects for a negotiated settlement are new fears. Christian Democrats have recently acknowledged with candor the immediate threat that political accommodation with the rebels could pose. "Six months after we sign a peace treaty, and these leftists start wandering around the country organizing legally, all the agrarian reform cooperatives would turn communist," said one of Duarte's aides. Miguel Parada, rector of the battered National University, where leftists have renewed organizing recently, made the same point about school-age youth. Parada said he believes that the left still enjoys wide organizing opportunities on the country's campuses and among unemployed youths.

In the labor movement as well, signs of leftward moves indicate that rebel agitators may find the ground more fertile than at any time since the rebels abandoned large-scale organizing in 1980 to wage the guerrilla war. The political picture inside El Salvador's unions has been especially complicated for the Duarte government by U.S. attempts to recast the labor movement around a new center-right federation. Since 1980, the AFL-CIO's American Institute of Free Labor Development has funded the Popular Democratic Unity, UPD, a political federation of peasant and trade unions. The UPD's leaders are street-smart peasant and trade union organizers—men who wear sandals but carry briefcases—and represent the only organized center-left force remaining in the country. The AFL-CIO's support has attempted to keep them centrist, and under control.

Three months after Duarte's 1984 presidential victory, UPD leaders publicly criticized Duarte for failing to prosecute army officers accused of political murders and, the unionists charged, for stalling on opening a dialogue with the guerrillas. To the AFL-CIO's Institute, that criticism proved the UPD had become too radical. Institute organizers, who because of their funding relationship with the U.S. government wear U.S. Embassy badges, initiated a transparent drive to break the UPD by creating a rival federation. UPD leaders say the drive so far has involved two elections rigged to oust key UPD leaders, bribe attempts to induce UPD leaders to cooperate with the Institute's newly created rival, and cutoffs of U.S. aid when they have refused.

The effort appears to have run aground, and the Institute's discredited director was recently transferred out of the country. Jack Heberle, the Institute's Washington-based spokesman, says that it never intended to weaken support for Duarte, only to tilt labor's influence back to the center. The opposite appears to have occurred. The UPD leaders, embittered by the interference, appear more militant than ever. At a recent summit in Sonsonate province, the assembled labor chieftains listed their post-election priorities: peace talks, freedom for political prisoners, and even a renewed "struggle for national sovereignty" by the Duarte government—a thinly disguised call for a reduction in U.S. involvement in El Salvador.

Beyond dialogue, UPD leaders are most insistent now in demanding that Duarte move to prosecute political murderers. Hundreds of the federation's own militants have been assassinated. In one celebrated case in February 1983, army troops intervened in a land dispute on Las Hojas, an Indian cooperative, slaughtering 74 peasants.

Perhaps Duarte's most troubling dilemma is how to maintain army loyalty while prosecuting guilty officers. His general tactic, according to Christian Democratic Party lawyer Humberto Posanda, will be to reform the judicial system rather than to push for punishment of past crimes. One of Duarte's first flourishes as president in 1984 was to secure $900,000 in U.S. funds for an investigative commission to probe celebrated political murders. But the assembly, then under rightist control, put a halt to that notion. The 12 supreme court justices and the attorney general—all rightists—blocked other attempts to punish political murder.

As one of its first measures, the new Christian Democratic Assembly emphasized its determination for judicial reform by replacing the rightist attorney general. The establishment of the investigative commission will come next, party leaders say. But Posanda maintains that the supreme court will remain untouched unless it commits impeachable offenses. Duarte's political fortunes will depend at least partly on the degree to which his supporters will accept mere judicial reform instead of retribution.

BEFORE THE March voting, U.S. officials worried that a Duarte sweep could provoke rightist violence. But the death squads have remained quiet, and the post-vote calm is a sign of progress in Washington's five-year effort to tame the semi-feudal Salvadoran right and modernize Salvadoran capitalism. Gradually the rich have accepted the Reagan administration's deal: play by constitutional rules, and the United States will provide the dollars and the guns to ensure that business prospers and the insurgency fades. Symbolically, Roberto d'Aubuisson—the dark prince of the feudal right—was the biggest loser; many believe his career as the oligarchy's standard bearer

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is finished. El Salvador's shattered right will have three years before new elections to lick their wounds and, perhaps, realign around new leaders. In the meantime, however, it has been deprived of formal power.

Christian Democrats say that in the vacuum they expect the Reagan administration to emerge as the strongest advocate of private sector interests. On economic issues, Reagan administration officials find more in common with the right's free enterprise prescriptions than with Duarte's *cooperativismo*. During Duarte's first ten months, U.S. officials brought constant pressure on him to build bridges to his business enemies, while bolstering the flow of U.S. aid to private sector organizations.

A month after Duarte took office in 1984, U.S. officials withheld dispersal of some $75 million in aid, demanding that he take measures to benefit the country's cotton, shrimp, sugar, and coffee exporters. Duarte complained, then complied. Last December U.S. officials withheld another $93 million, demanding changes in government import regulations. Recently the Reagan administration has increased its flow of aid to the private sector. Over the next three years, the administration will channel nearly seven million dollars to several private sector groups who have been among Duarte's sharpest critics. The funds will help businessmen develop strategies for negotiating more forcefully with the Duarte government over policy.

These parallel efforts—to weaken Duarte's grass-roots allies on the one hand, and to bolster his longtime business foes on the other—will dominate the Christian Democrats' second year in office. How successfully Duarte resists the pressures to veer right will determine the degree to which he keeps his promises of peace, reform, and justice in El Salvador.

SAM DILLON

Sam Dillon, a reporter for *The Miami Herald*, has covered Central America for four years.

Desperately seeking standards.

THE RATING GAME

THE *Desperately Seeking Susan* you can see at your local bijou is not the movie Susan Seidelman originally made. There's a scene, for example, in which Rosanna Arquette clambers out of Aidan Quinn's bed. Look hard, but you still won't see her breasts—they've been "optically darkened" to blend into the shadows. Then there's the scene in which Robert Joy amorously mauls Madonna while she sits atop a pinball machine; the joke is that the crescendo of bells and buzzers comments on their passion. That scene's been edited, too, even though Madonna never really gets undressed. Such is the work of the Motion Picture Association of America's rating board, which occasionally sees nudity even *through* clothes.

For almost 17 years, the MPAA has been rating the suitability of movies for people under the age of 17. A board of seven, including 11-year chairman Richard Hefner, reviews some 350 movies a year. All are parents, ranging in age from mid-30s to 60; all are selected by Hefner, although one comes on the recommendation of the California PTA, and the nominees are cleared by MPAA president Jack Valenti. In order to keep the board close to changing tastes and attitudes, only two of the members serve an extended tenure. Two serve two-year terms, two for one year. Except for Hefner, their names are not known.

The single, generally phrased standard for ratings (taking into account the film's level of violence, sexuality, nudity, and profanity) is: "Would the average American parent consider this film suitable for children under 17?" A movie is rated G if the average parent would consider it acceptable for children of all ages; PG ("parental guidance") indicates that parents should use their discretion about whether it is suitable for their kids to see on their own; PG-13 if the film contains disturbing material to a degree that it requires a closer look for preteens; R if the film is acceptable for children only with the attendance of the parent; and X for "clearly adult" films. In 1984 roughly 30 percent of the films rated got a PG; 60 percent got an R.

FILMMAKERS disgruntled by the MPAA's decision can appeal to a board composed of 22 industry representatives: nine designated by the studios and eight by the National Association of Theater Owners, four from the Independent Film Importers and Distributors Association, and Valenti. In November 1983, Hefner reported that out of some 3,500 films rated, 102 had been appealed. The greatest success comes from appeals of the "automatic language rule," which says that a single use of one of the "harsher, sexually derived words" ("fuck," "cocksucker," and the like) automatically triggers a PG-13 rating; a second use gets an automatic R. Often the board itself endorses such appeals, sensing that sexually derived words aren't as offensive in a nonsexual context. Or in director Albert Brooks's words, "If you say, 'I'm going to fuck you over,' that's a PG-13. If you say, 'I'm going to fuck you over the desk,' that's an R." Which is exactly what happened to Brooks's *Lost in America*.

Other appeals are less successful (by Hefner's 1983 count, only 12 of 55 appealed ratings were overturned), partly because there's little filmmakers can do by way of argument. Except for the automatic language rule, there are no written absolutes—every tub stands on its own bottom. "We try to make certain that the Rule of Reason, rather than any particular rule, applies," says Hefner, which means that an appeal simply stacks the filmmakers' reason against the board's. And the raters are loath to tell filmmakers exactly what it is that bothered them so much; they simply give the rating, adding perhaps that it's "too

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violent" or "too sexy." "Sometimes they sort of take you aside and you say, 'Would it be O.K. if we took out those 'fucks'?" says producer Craig Zadan. "And they say, 'Well, we can't promise anything, but yeah.' It's all done in a sort of code, with a wink."

A kind of common law of ratings has evolved, and inevitably, the parsing of distinctions gets pretty silly. Nudity can get you a PG as long as it's in a pristine jungle setting with no men around (*Sheena*); if the nudity comes in a sexual setting, it's generally an R. Shots of the drawings of Aubrey Beardsley had to be cut from *Crimes of Passion* before the film could be rated R; the same drawings are available to children in any bookstore.

Quantity seems to matter: the lovemaking in the unrated videotape of *Thief of Hearts* isn't any different from the R-rated version that played in theaters—there's just more of it. Producer Roger Corman recalls how, in the upcoming *Streetwalkin'*, the ratings board said that it was simply "too violent." Corman edited the picture, and it was still "too violent." It turned out that a scene in which a man hit a woman three times, which became two in the first edit, had to be reduced to one swipe before the film could qualify for an R. On the other hand, as far as profanity is concerned, quantity hardly matters. "There's no difference between 1 and 1,000," says Brooks, "I could have had a hundred 'cunts' in the movie, gotten the same R, and done much better in Texas."

Generally the ratings board seems more tolerant of violence than sex—full frontal nudity is usually an automatic X, while lots of heads have to roll before a film will be rated X for violence. Then again, self-mutilation, like the scene in *The Evil Dead* where a creature bites off his own head, is an X-rated no-no. *Dogs* got an R because it featured a pack of dogs—"children's favorite household pets"—gone berserk. And according to producer Don Simpson, Paramount's head of production at the time, *Prophecy* initially got an X because of a shot of a bear chewing an automobile tire.

A bear chewing an automobile tire?

"I cut 12 frames—remember film is 24 frames a second—and we got an R," Simpson recalls. "We did a few other snippets here and there too," he admits.

King David had the same decapitations, impalings, and assorted slashings and hewings as *Friday the 13th: Part V*, but it was the Bible, the actors spoke with English accents, and most of all, had the good taste to keep their clothes while they lost their heads. It got a PG-13. And so forth.

THE MPAA emphasizes that the system is voluntary: no one is *forced* to change his or her movie. Then again, when all the major studios have "volunteered" to follow the ratings code, how voluntary is it? A clause insisting that the director deliver a non-X picture is standard in every contract. According to the National Association of Theater Owners, 85 percent of all theaters enforce the ratings. And all of the largest theater chains refuse, as a matter of policy, to play an X-rated movie.

Occasionally filmmakers actually want a more severe rating than they get. Twentieth Century-Fox wanted a PG for *Star Wars*, for example, so that adults wouldn't think it was just a movie for kids. And Robert Benton recalls that he was disappointed when *Still of the Night* only got a PG. "I thought I'd made a sexier and more violent picture than I did," he says wistfully. But no filmmaker wants an X—because of the effective boycott by the studios and theater owners, only a movie with a ridiculously low budget (like *The Evil Dead*) could survive. And in today's market, most films need a PG or PG-13 to turn a profit; instead of turning to the appeals board, filmmakers simply make the necessary changes. Zadan cut the three "fucks" out of the teen-oriented *Footloose* (including one that got a big laugh from preview audiences); the brief glimpse of Kate Capshaw's breasts got *Dreamscape* an R, so the nudity was edited out.

IN THE END, the ratings are as voluntary as "your money or your life." Take *Susan*. Although not a teen movie, it has a built-in audience among Madonna's fans, thought to be mostly 11- and 12-year-olds. And 21 percent of the audience for *all* movies is under 18. So Seidelman had a choice between keeping the offending scenes, presenting the movie with an R rating, and losing that audience; or doing what the MPAA required. This is censorship, capitalist style.

According to Hefner, though, the whole point of the ratings is to avoid censorship through self-regulation. The idea is that, without the ratings, more direct, more intrusive forms of censorship would flourish. Simpson, who describes himself as a "four-square libertarian," says, "Censorship is something I abhor. On the other hand, I don't want Ronald Reagan deciding the same thing—we'd have blank screens. The MPAA, at least, is equitable in its decision-making process."

Partisans of the ratings system couch their defense in pseudo-democratic rhetoric. Because the ratings are "advisory," each parent is allowed to decide whether his children should see a movie. The problem is that in this democracy, the kids themselves count not at all; and once you start with this principle, it's hard to limit it. How would we feel if books received ratings, and a 15-year-old had to be accompanied by his parent before he could check *Huckleberry Finn*, or even *Ball Four*, out of the library? And why should movies be different?

The system's primary virtue—that it is a single, simple, unified system—is also its downfall. The psychology of children is complex; different kids get nightmares from different things. What's more, in a country as large and varied as ours, the idea of a central organ of taste is preposterous. A parent in the Bible Belt might find the chain saw murder of a woman perfectly appropriate Saturday night fun, while the utterance of a single "goddamn" would call for a gallon of earwash. A feminist in downtown Washington might feel exactly the opposite.

Part of the answer, then, is to return the judgment to the localities, just as the Supreme Court has done in its obscenity rulings. Most local papers, including my own, now include a parents' guide at the end of film reviews,

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describing the content of the picture in terms of nudity, violence, sex, and profanity. Besides the salubrious effect of forcing people to read their local movie critic, the substitution of this parents' guide for a ratings code, both more specific and more attuned to local mores, would allow parents to make better decisions for their children. And because such a system would be truly advisory, it would allow for one of the most time-honored traditions in American movies—a kid sneaking into a theater against his parents' orders.

PAUL ATTANASIO

Paul Attanasio is the movie critic for *The Washington Post*.

A practical look at everyone's favorite industrial panacea.

BLUE-COLLAR BOARDROOMS

BY ROBERT KUTTNER

SINCE LATE 1983 Eastern Airlines has been 25 percent owned by its employees. Every month Eastern's finance vice president opens the books for the shop stewards committee. Workers get advance notification of all proposed capital investments, and they review corporate planning decisions. Union crew leaders have taken responsibility for scheduling and directing work, allowing the company to eliminate an entire tier of supervisors. Grievances have declined dramatically. After losing money for four years, Eastern reported first-quarter operating profits of $107 million.

At rival People Express, where there are no unions, 35 percent of the company stock is owned by workers. The company is built around a novel system of participatory management. People grew from three planes and 250 workers in 1981 to a billion-dollar airline by 1985, a growth rate that matches any high-tech start-up. Don Burr, the charismatic founder of the airline, likes to claim that "we have no employees, only managers." A People Express TV commercial shows a white-collar employee on a rainy night smiling broadly as he kicks a stray chock into place under the wheel of a big jet plane. The voice-over says: "There's a certain kind of guy who'll never say, 'That's not my job.' You know what you call that kind of guy? An owner."

Worker ownership has descended on America's troubled industrial stage like a deus ex machina. Six major air carriers have devised variations on the lower wages/employee stock/worker involvement formula. Similar deals have occurred in steel, autos, meat-packing, railroads, and telecommunications. But hold on a moment. At Eastern, the new cooperation notwithstanding, management and labor reverted to bitter confrontation in their negotiations for the 1985-86 contract, barely averting bankruptcy for the second time. And at People, the company posted a loss for the last two quarters. Part-timers have been hired at five dollars an hour to take reservations, load baggage, and man ground stations. Around the company's big Newark base, this new underclass of guest workers is called "the non-People people." Many employees say that People is beginning to feel like just another company.

Elsewhere on the worker-ownership front, ESOPs—based on a 1974 amendment to the tax code that gives special tax treatment to companies with Employee Stock Ownership Plans—will consume $2.5 billion in tax expenditures this year. Yet all but a handful are in conventionally managed companies where employees get some profit sharing but no say in management. At most companies that use them, ESOPs are only a device to lower capital costs. Work quality circles and employee involvement programs are all the rage in the business schools, yet studies suggest that many gains are transient and short-lived. The high-tech industry is famous for profit sharing, open-door management, and egalitarian lunchrooms and parking lots, but production work in high tech remains low paying and demoralizing. Even in the famous case of Weirton Steel, where a 1982 worker buy-out orchestrated by Lazard Frères saved a billion-dollar company and put it back in the black, employees are working at about 20 percent below their old wage and must wait five years before they can elect the board of directors.

Welcome to the ambiguous world of employee ownership. The hoary socialist dream of workers owning the means of production is suddenly very much in vogue in this most capitalist of times. Many entrepreneurs see participatory management and profit sharing as a more effective business strategy to enrich both the workplace and the bottom line. Many neoliberals think worker ownership is a better version of industrial democracy than trade unionism. And some trade unionists are looking guardedly at worker ownership as a survival strategy. Obviously em-

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ployee ownership cannot be all three things at once.

Yet worker ownership should be taken very seriously. It is immensely appealing as a philosophical proposition, for it solves a number of the knottiest problems of political economy. For those who value the efficiency and variety of free markets, worker ownership promises a capitalism where everyone is a capitalist. For those attracted to the fraternity and community of socialism, worker ownership promises an entrepreneurial socialism without bureaucracy. For believers in participatory democracy, worker ownership extends the ethic of political democracy to the workplace, the most stubbornly hierarchical institution in a democratic society. Besides, if labor unions are worth having, as a democratic counterweight to the immense political influence of business in a market economy, then worker ownership is a very good strategy for reinventing a labor movement.

THE CURRENT interest in worker ownership reflects three quite distinct historical strands: the cooperative movement, which began in the 19th century; the enlightened management tradition, which invented profit sharing in the 1920s; and most recently, the industrial distress of the 1970s and 1980s, which gave rise to the current wave of worker buy-outs.

In the 1860s and 1870s, thousands of workers in the skilled trades were members of co-ops sponsored by the Knights of Labor and other early unions. But the labor movement soon turned to AFL-style "business unionism," and the few surviving producer co-ops typically foundered on financial and management problems: where to get start-up and expansion capital; where to train workers as managers; how a retiring member cashes out, and how a new member buys in.

The most successful solution to this problem was devised by the highly profitable Mondragon co-ops of northern Spain, which employ about 20,000 workers in 85 independent firms in a variety of industrial enterprises. Mondragon solved the problem by establishing its own bank, and creating an entrepreneurial department to organize new co-ops. A new Mondragon co-op member borrows money from the co-op bank to finance his equity share of ownership. When he retires, the co-op bank buys him out, and he may withdraw his nest egg as an annuity. A Mondragon-style co-op reconciles the dilemma of how to give individual workers the fruits of ownership without allowing the co-op to deteriorate into just another investor-owned firm as the first generation of workers retire.

According to Christopher Mackin of the Industrial Co-op Association (ICA), which organizes U.S. co-ops along Mondragon lines, "Conventional firms in a market economy are governed on the basis of one-share/one-vote. By changing that to one worker/one vote, Mondragon overturns the capitalist assumption that control is based on shares of capital, while still allowing for necessary differentials in wage rates and profit accumulation." ICA, which has a million-dollar revolving loan fund to help finance worker co-ops, is one of several surprisingly sophisticated new organizations committed to worker ownership.

Profit sharing, the second aspect of the current employee-ownership boom, began in the 1920s when enlightened capitalists invented a package of paternalistic devices, known as the "American Plan," as union-avoidance medicine. The American Plan combined company unions, pensions, and profit sharing. By 1929, when the Great Crash buried the idea, about a million workers were enrolled. In the postwar period, profit sharing and participatory management revived as enlightened management ideas, and got a big boost in 1974 with the ESOP legislation. Millions of words have been written about ESOPs. Suffice it to say here that an ESOP allows a company with a profit-sharing plan to borrow tax-sheltered money. The plan was devised by an investment banker, Louis Kelso, and sold to Senator Russell Long, who liked its combination of pseudo-populism and business-as-usual. But to generate tax breaks for the company, an ESOP need not give its workers voting rights. Today some ten million workers in 7,000 firms are enrolled in ESOPs. Only about 100 are employee-controlled.

During the late 1970s, as basic industries were buffeted by recession and global competition, employees began trying to buy out companies in order to save jobs. A handful of distress buy-outs briefly became shrines for worker-ownership advocates to visit. Virtually every one failed. One of the first, the 2,000-worker Rath Meatpacking Company of Waterloo, Iowa, was to worker ownership what Barney Clark was to heart surgery. To prolong its brief life, Rath required several rounds of dubious heroics—subsidies, artificial life-support systems, and painful austerity measures. Initially the union local at Rath accepted payroll deductions of about $4,000 per worker to finance a buy-out with bank loans. A $4.3 million federal economic development grant was thrown into the pot. Later Rath's pension fund was consumed. Workers took a second round of pay cuts. But the meat-packing business continued to decline, and today Rath is bankrupt.

IN ANOTHER early buy-out, union workers at the South Bend Lathe company in Indiana used an ESOP to borrow money from local banks and avert a shutdown. But voting shares were weighted in favor of management. In 1980 South Bend workers made headlines by going on strike ostensibly against themselves. South Bend Lathe still operates, but not as a truly worker-owned company. In a third case, the Vermont Asbestos Group sold its mining operation to local workers. The company's fortunes rebounded. Most workers sold their stock and got rich. But the firm ceased to be employee-owned. At South Bend and Rath, where union locals initiated the buy-out, parent unions opposed the plan because it undercut the union's master contract.

In the past three years, this picture has begun to change. Some of the missing ingredients have started converging: financing, technical competence, union support. How-

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ever, it is not surprising that most examples of "employee ownership" are still cases of traditional corporate management recognizing the value of making the workplace a bit less alienating, rather than workers effectively organizing *production*.

PEOPLE EXPRESS. People Express epitomizes the corporation as benevolent paternalist. People combines low fares, no-frills service, and low labor costs with novel approaches to almost every aspect of airline management. There are no assigned seats, no special promotional fares, and tickets are purchased on board. People has little hierarchy, substantial cross-utilization of employees, a great deal of worker involvement in planning, and more than a little boosterism. Statistically, it has the most efficient work force in the industry. In effect, the human relations concept is an aspect of the marketing strategy. High worker morale translates into cheap fares and high customer service. People's labor costs are an almost unheard-of 18 percent of gross revenues, compared to an industry norm of 35-40 percent.

Don Burr, the airline's chairman, founder, and final authority, is part marketing genius and part motivational guru. Burr says he expects his brand of participatory management to become a "role model" for other corporations. Delivering a guest lecture at the Harvard Business School, Burr peppers the students with an occult vocabulary of People buzzwords. At People, he tells the students, ROI doesn't mean return on investment but Role Of the Individual. The individual is empowered by the three Cs: "Care, Context, and Celebration." The famous strategy of *In Search of Excellence*, management-by-walking-around, or MBWA, Burr amends to MABW—Making A Better World: helping thousands of People people to have fulfilling careers, helping millions of others to experience inexpensive, safe air travel.

In manner, Burr, 44, is reminiscent of former California governor Jerry Brown: earnest, upbeat, relentlessly New Age, and unmistakably lean and hungry. He would do well as a talk show host or as an est trainer. He gives much the same talk to financial analysts, business writers, and above all to each new class of entering People trainees. His is the familiar siren song of the fabulously successful entrepreneur: You Can Be Like Me.

It is hard to imagine that a new airline could prosper by improving on the determined cheer of the average airline employee, but People seems to have done it. New People staff are generally college graduates. Every prospective employee is put through a battery of tests and screening procedures designed to weed out people with "negative personalities." Burr says: "The hiring criterion was, would we want to go to dinner with them?" Recruits must buy 100 shares of stock, which currently cost about $1,000, and they receive periodic opportunities to buy additional stock at slightly below the market price as well as yearly profit-sharing bonuses. Salaries begin at $17,000 for service managers, and $22,000 for pilots. One employee in 20 is a "team leader," receiving an extra few thousand dollars. Senior officers, including Burr, make a salary of $63,500, plus more substantial profit sharing.

In theory, every People employee spends some time on direct customer service. The steward serving you coffee could be a financial vice president. In theory, too, there are only three basic employee classifications: Customer Service Managers, or CSMs, who rotate as both counter clerks and flight attendants; pilots, known as Flight Managers, or FMs; and Maintenance Managers, or MMs. According to Burr's design, there is no separate management hierarchy, because all employees have both customer contact and corporate planning responsibilities. One customer service manager whom I interviewed is also responsible for liaison with travel agents. A pilot who flies 65 hours a month is also the team leader of a group in charge of fuel pricing. Burr wrote in a *Wall Street Journal* "Manager's Journal" column last year, "Every worker at People Express is a manager . . . no one has a secretary at People Express. . . . Our managers' daily assignments change regularly here. Customer Service Managers will on one day be responsible for counter 'M' and on another day will be responsible for the recruiting of 50 people."

IT ALL SOUNDS a little too good to be true, and in fact it isn't entirely true. The fiction that everyone is a manager is preserved by introducing a substratum of employees, the "non-People people." If People aspires to a kind of Athenian democracy where every employee is a citizen, it also has its seldom acknowledged barbarian class. Maintenance crews, baggage attendants, and telephone reservation clerks are all outside the worker-owner system. These "non-People people," who get neither the profit sharing nor the indoctrination, nonetheless perform well, according to Larry Martin, a senior officer, because of the close supervision of managers. Martin says they are necessary because "we want people managing the environment, taking care of customers, not doing production work. When you put people in production work, at some point they start thinking like production workers." A touch of Animal Farm has crept into Burr's utopia. Some People are more equal than others.

Nor is the job rotation quite what it is cracked up to be. Many employees gravitate to one job—working a flight crew, or manning a counter. Those who don't like to fly cause management substantial consternation—they are known as "ground hogs." Though middle managers do put in their time on customer service, "a lot of people at the counter don't have any staff responsibility, they just work the counter," according to one CSM. This source says it was simply too confusing to come into a staff job one day a week or one week a month and pick up where somebody else left off.

Another problem is that many pilots at People have never bought into the ideology. Their real aspiration is a higher-paid pilot job at a more conventional airline, and whenever United or TWA starts hiring, pilots leave People by the dozen. To stem the departures and enhance the prestige of his "flight managers," Burr has put a dispro-

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portionate share of pilots into the team leader jobs, which has displeased other employees. A pilot/team manager earns $63,500, whereas a customer service manager who is also a team leader earns only $25,000. The Airline Pilots Association is now on its third organizing drive at People Express.

People has also suffered as other airlines have scrambled to meet the cheap-fare competition head-to-head. As profitability and growth have declined, so has the high-flying people stock. Many of People's early paper millionaires now have more modest holdings. People closed out 1984 with net earnings of just one million dollars on gross revenues of over half a billion, and is now barely breaking even. With no profit, there is of course no profit sharing. And a $17,000 salary without supplementary profit sharing is not nearly so good a deal.

In order to stem the bureaucratization of the airline, in mid-1984 Burr conceived a radical decentralization. What worked with an initial staff of 250, he says, simply could not work with 4,000. Since last January, People has broken into 11 "operations groups," each of which attempts to operate as a mini airline. The planning for this restructuring was intense and painful. Of the six-member officer team in charge of the decentralization, three quit in late 1984, including People's president.

Some at People say that the exhilarating feeling of participation and possibility depended heavily on being a new, high-growth company. With slower growth and its Fortune 500 scale come ossification and disillusion. In that respect, People Express has something in common with inspirational door-to-door operations like Dare to Be Great and Amway, where morale depends on a continual broadening of the pyramid. Still, on balance People invites far more worker participation than most companies; it shows that employee ownership can help fuel efficiency, growth, and morale. But it is built more on charismatic authority than on worker control and it falls well short of industrial democracy.

EASTERN. Eastern Airlines contrasts markedly with People Express. It is a well-established, high-cost, union airline, not a lean and eccentric start-up. Worker participation and partial employee ownership were not the ideals of a founder, but were thrust on skeptical union leaders and equally skeptical company managers by the company's brush with bankruptcy in 1983, which was the fruit of the same deregulation that made possible People Express.

There are three separate unions at Eastern, representing pilots, flight attendants, and maintenance personnel. District 100 of the Machinists, representing ground crews, is the most interesting part of the story, because the Machinists have made the most of Eastern's new worker ownership. After difficult negotiations in 1983, unions and management finally struck a bargain that included the usual wage-cut-for-worker-stock deal, but with several variations, the most notable of which were substantial sharing of privileged company financial data and real power. Labor and management jointly created a cost-cutting task force. Unlike most quality of work life programs, Eastern's is run by the Machinists' shop stewards, so it is built into the day-to-day operation of the union, rather then being a separate program.

In the first year of the contract, Machinist-initiated productivity improvements saved Eastern over $30 million. During the pre-1983 years of labor-management hostility, Eastern had contracted out every possible job it could get away with, in order to minimize its dependence on the Machinists. After 1983 union and management devised a "contracting-in committee," which found that in case after case work could be done more cheaply in-house. For example, Machinists found that a 90-man crew could be assembled to overhaul jet engines without hiring any new outside people. Machinists in the engine shop found ways to rebuild expensive engine parts that were being scrapped.

However, in negotiations for the 1985-86 contract, Eastern's president, Frank Borman, abruptly demanded that wage cuts be made permanent. The new, harmonious atmosphere rapidly degenerated. Ultimately, the Machinists got an immediate wage restoration of five percent and the right to win back the rest with productivity improvements. But the wrangling over the contract eroded much of the fragile trust that had been built up during 1984.

Like People Express, Eastern suggests that worker participation and co-ownership can indeed improve morale and productivity. But in a supercompetitive environment like the deregulated airlines industry, the company is likely to keep coming back at the employees for more and more wage concessions. And many unionists question whether the union's traditional role as employee advocate is ultimately compatible with its new role of efficiency expert and cost cutter. The recent bargaining round made Machinist leaders that much warier of trusting the company.

On the other hand, co-determination bargains like Eastern's vindicate the widely held view on the shop floor that the worker really does know more than the boss. To the extent that both labor and management are responsible for the American bureaucratic style of labor relations, with its bloated middle management, its baroque job classifications and inefficient work rules, Eastern-style power sharing gives the union a more useful and constructive kind of authority to defend worker interests. It can also equip the union with new analytical, financial, and managerial skills, which vastly increase its sophistication.

WEIRTON STEEL. Presumably the solution to the travails of partial worker ownership is total worker ownership. At Weirton the company volunteered to sell itself outright to the workers. Weirton, a division of National Steel located in West Virginia's northern panhandle, was making money—about a one percent return on sales of one billion dollars—but not enough money for a profit-maximizing conglomerate. Shutting down the plant would have been very costly, mainly because National had liabilities totaling almost $800 million for pension obli-

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gations and severance benefits. In March 1982, when National Steel decided that Weirton was no longer worth the trouble, corporate buyers were not exactly lined up to acquire steel mills. So National approached the one buyer who had to take the offer seriously, Weirton's 7,500 workers.

WEIRTON, founded in 1909 by Ernest T. Weir, is a company town of about 25,000 residents, dominated physically, socially, and financially by the steel mill. Its union, the Independent Steelworkers, is a company union that has never been on strike. Weirton traditionally paid about ten percent more than the United Steelworkers of America Basic Steel Agreement, giving it labor peace but very high labor costs.

In the 1982 buy-out negotiations, union and management jointly hired the management consultants McKinsey and Company to do a feasibility study. McKinsey calculated that Weirton could work as a worker-owned plant. Its product, steel tinplate, continued to have a robust market. But to remain competitive, Weirton needed to lower its labor costs by a staggering 32 percent. Of this, 12 percent would go to purchase stock; the rest would be a direct pay cut. This was bitter medicine, but a 20 percent reduction in wages averaging nearly $30,000 a year was preferable to unemployment.

In mid-1982 a second consultant entered the picture, Lazard Frères. Lazard's managing partner, Felix Rohatyn, is rather friendlier to the idea of worker buy-outs than most Wall Street investment bankers, and has a European view of unions as constructive social partners. Rohatyn, of course, played the central role in the New York City rescue, in which the purchase of New York securities by the city's unions and substantial wage cuts were key elements of the deal. Lazard was also a consultant in the Eastern Airlines restructuring. The firm has one partner, Eugene Keilin, who spends much of his time on employee stock deals, as well as Josh Gotbaum, whose father is the New York labor leader Victor Gotbaum.

The trouble, however, is that Lazard remains fundamentally a capitalist investment firm, and not a labor bank. In the Weirton case, Lazard prides itself on having put together one sweet deal. The cash buy-out price was just $75 million down, with National itself providing the remaining financing on favorable terms. But rather than structuring Weirton as a fully worker-run company, Lazard created an employee stock ownership plan that gives employees full voting rights only after five years. In the meantime, Weirton's governing body is an outside board of directors picked largely by Lazard. Of the 14-member board, the union got to elect just three. Although there is a modest employee-involvement program at Weirton, it has nothing like the power that the Machinists enjoy at Eastern.

Thus Eastern, 25 percent worker-owned, resembles an employee-run company, while Weirton, ostensibly 100 percent worker-owned, does not. In the Eastern negotiations Lazard was present, but as an adviser to management, while the union had its own financial advisers, in the person of Locker-Abrecht associates. In the Weirton negotiations, Lazard represented "everybody," a role that Lazard much prefers, and ended up calling the shots.

As Lazard people are the first to acknowledge, the short-run objective at Weirton was not to structure far-reaching self-management but to provide a vehicle for steep wage cuts and salvage a potentially viable company. It is not clear what form of management Weirton will have in the long run. After five years, when Weirton workers get full voting rights, they may also decide whether to sell some of their stock. Weirton today is making money. Over 7,000 jobs have been saved, a notable accomplishment. But so far the real power at Weirton has been wielded by managers and investment bankers, not by organized employees.

OWNED AND OPERATED. There are, however, a handful of companies that are both worker-owned and worker-controlled. Although one should not be too sanguine about their prospects, there are two critical new elements that were not present in the first wave of worker buy-outs of the late 1970s. First, unions are getting serious about the idea. And second, there is the beginning of a financial infrastructure that could do for worker ownership what investment bankers do for ordinary capitalist enterprise.

In 1982 A&P made a corporate decision to shut down an entire division, with 79 stores, in greater Philadelphia. PACE—the Philadelphia Association for Cooperative Enterprise—and Local 1357 of the United Food and Commercial workers, working with public officials and community groups, began negotiating with A&P for ways to keep the supermarkets open. Eventually A&P agreed to keep open 16 of its stores, but spun off two large worker-owned supermarkets, the O&O Stores.

O&O, which will add a third store next month, and five by the end of 1986, is structured Mondragon-style, as a one-worker/one-vote co-op. Members of each co-op elect the board of directors, and the board hires the store manager. Workers participate in management committees and make all the business decisions, including marketing, purchasing, recruiting, finance, business planning, capital investment, and so on. To join the co-op, a worker must pay an equity share of $5,000, which can be borrowed from Local 1357's credit union and repaid via payroll deductions. When a worker wants to retire, the co-op will buy out his share.

In addition, PACE operates a venture fund, to finance new O&O stores, as well as intensive worker training in self-management. In the third O&O store, which will open next month in a very depressed North Philadelphia neighborhood, PACE in effect played the role of investment banker on a ten million dollar deal, working with the city of Philadelphia and local banks.

"The problem with worker ownership," says Andrew Lamas, the staff director of PACE, "is not lack of capital. It's lack of experience. Nobody in America knows how to

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operate a 1,000-person worker-owned firm. People don't have much experience with democratic decision-making in their daily lives, and they also lack technical and financial skills."

The O&O market in Philadelphia's Rosslyn section looks nothing like the hand-to-mouth food co-ops of the 1960s. It looks like a more efficient version of the local A&P, complete with shelves of junk food. The market's productivity gains since becoming worker-owned in October 1982 are astonishing. Sales are up 100 percent, to $170,000 a week. Labor costs are running at nine percent of gross sales, compared to about 15 percent when the store was operated by A&P. Another index, sales-per-person-hour, is about 20 percent above the industry average.

Like the Machinists at Eastern Airlines, the UFCW local is involved in every phase of the operation. Training classes are conducted at the local union hall. Equity loans are financed by the local's credit union. Union members laid off from other area supermarkets get first crack at job openings. And the union's contract with A&P provides that O&O gets right of first refusal to buy any additional stores A&P decides to close. "Worker ownership is just a better way of getting the age-old things that the labor movement fought and died for," says Wendell Young, president of the 22,000-member UFCW Local 1371.

CURRENTLY there are about ten companies like O&O nationwide. As more of these firms succeed, as unions grow comfortable with them, and as technical support operations like ICA and PACE gain experience, the approach will be taken more seriously. A number of unions are experimenting with democratically run, union-affiliated enterprises. The Service Employees International Union is working with the Community Service Society of New York to launch a worker-owned home health care cooperative. The United Steelworkers are actively pursuing a buy-out of a major U.S. Steel plant in Pennsylvania's Monongahela Valley. John Joyce, international president of the Bricklayers union, has retained ICA to help develop bricklayers' co-ops. UAW locals now represent several moderately successful worker-owned companies; the UAW has substantial profit sharing and employee involvement at the major automakers, and joint planning responsibilities for the new Toyota-GM joint venture in Fremont, California.

David Ellerman, an economist with ICA who is probably the closest thing to a resident ideologist of worker ownership, writes that a worker co-op turns the usual industrial relationship on its head. Instead of capital hiring labor, labor hires capital. But in a democratic co-op, an employee who has acquired more stock will get a greater financial return, but not greater influence over how the company is run, for democratic worker ownership is based on one worker/one vote.

Ellerman uses the analogy of property rights and citizenship, as these concepts developed in the 17th and 18th centuries. Before the democratic revolutions of the Enlightenment, he notes, "political sovereignty over people's lives was based on property rights in land." One could imagine a transition to political democracy either via broadened landholdings, which democratized sovereignty but still tied political rights to land ownership, or by the creation of a new category of rights unrelated to property, namely the invention of democratic citizenship, which is what actually happened. In the ICA vision of worker ownership, authority flows from democratic membership in the co-op, not from broadened distribution of employee stock.

WORKER OWNERSHIP, then, calls for an entirely different conception of labor in an entrepreneurial economy. It is striking that, under our system, someone who has worked 20 years for a company has no legitimate claim on it, while somebody who has recently purchased shares has total control. The worker may be a full-fledged citizen in the political arena, but as an industrial worker he has no more rights over property than a medieval serf. Traditional trade unionism was a very imperfect way of righting this imbalance and extracting some grudging reciprocity. Worker ownership offers the prospect of extending citizen-style rights to the workplace by radically democratizing the principles of capitalism rather than by hobbling them.

A tour of the frontiers of worker ownership also underscores how little capital the owners of most firms actually have in it, and how little money, really, it takes for workers to buy a company. At Eastern Airlines, a one-year wage cut of 18 percent equaled more than the total value of Eastern stock. The corporate raiders making daily headlines only put up a tiny amount of their own capital. They borrow the rest, with the target company's own assets as collateral. If T. Boone Pickens can play this game, workers—with far more stake in the enterprise—can too.

I hope labor unions will continue their cautious courtship of worker ownership, for it puts the labor movement squarely on the side of productivity as well as security and democracy. Worker co-ops are also a better version of Professor Martin Weitzman's "share economy"—the notion that flexible compensation is the road to full employment—but without sacrificing the labor movement along the way. Labor unions have awakened to a world in which wages are suddenly, and ruthlessly, back in competition. With ordinary collective bargaining, unions will continue to be whipsawed. With ownership, wage flexibility doesn't undermine labor solidarity, and trade unions can regroup around a better strategic vision.

Given the general weakness of organized labor, it is likely that managers, not unions, will define most of the next wave of strategies for humanizing the workplace. For a time, there will be more People Expresses than O&O supermarkets. But a competition to see who can invent the more rewarding brand of employee participation is a vast improvement over the old industrial standoff in which one form of archaic authority was countered by a set of work rules and rituals almost as alienating. Unions have feared worker ownership as a Trojan Horse, but the horse can be theirs. □

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Class War

Once again the screen converts an actor's face into a calendar of our lives, and once again this perception is intensified by seeing his latest film only after his death. In 1958, to cite a past instance, it was Robert Donat, in *The Inn of Sixth Happiness*, the ivory version of our younger idol. Donat had died before the picture was released, and his last words on the screen were "We shall not meet again, I think. Farewell." Now it's James Mason who appears posthumously, as the wealthy titled Englishman of 1913 who is the host of *The Shooting Party*. His last words in the film don't have the same sad aptness as Donat's, but since the film is itself an elegy, Mason's whole performance has a silver melancholy. I saw him first in *I Met a Murderer* (1939), saturnine and gripping, and, along with the rest of the world, I've watched him go through many films and many years. Among artists there is an increment unique to actors, especially film actors: Mason's gently rueful old knight is deepened by our knowledge that it is old Mason.

The Shooting Party
(European Classics)

Around him is a fitting company. Dorothy Tutin, a British theater treasure, plays his wife, lady of a vast manor. Edward Fox, the human knife blade, plays the most troublesome of the guests in their house, a nearly pathological lord. Cheryl Campbell, who was evangelism personified in *Chariots of Fire*, here is Fox's hedonistic wife. The consciously fine young lovers (she's married, he isn't) are nicely turned by Judi Bowker and Rupert Frazer. An impressive man named Aharon Impale, new to me though a mature actor, plays the Jewish millionaire who is the uneasily welcomed member of the party. Gordon Jackson, best-known in the U.S. as the butler in the "Upstairs, Downstairs" TV series, is a wonderfully gnarled poacher who is pressed into service as a beater for the gentry's hunt. John Gielgud is passionately nutty as the crusader for animal rights who tries to stop the party's shooting of birds. (The confrontation between Gielgud and Mason, excellently written and played, is the first scene between them, I believe, since they were Cassius and Brutus in *Julius Caesar* in 1953.) Mason's other guests, including a snooty young Hungarian count, are also perfectly cast, as are two servant lovers who echo the above-stairs amours. Put such a group of actors in Tom Rand's Edwardian clothes (specially woven fabrics?) and the result is sumptuous nostalgia.

The pleasures go on. The music by John Scott is always helpful. Fred Tammes, the cinematographer, gives us earth and autumn outdoors without facile sepia; indoors he gives us period lighting without undue brilliance or shadow. The editor, Peter Davies, keeps the motion supple without distracting us. However, the editing probably owes a good deal—in general form—to Julian Bond's screenplay. I haven't read the Isabel Colegate novel on which it's based so I can't say how much of the dialogue is Bond's, but surely he's responsible for the structure, which deals handily with the group-protagonist problem. Bond keeps the numerous plot strands independent as they interweave.

Over all these elements presides the talent of the director, Alan Bridges. Clearly he is drawn to the earlier England of this century and to the interplay of classes. *The Hireling* was a small, true tragedy of class division. *The Return of the Soldier* dealt with cognate material. Here again Bridges is trying to understand the too easily understood, the tensions of class—between classes and within a class because class exists. His handling of place and protocol is fluent.

Bridges shows again that he inspires confidence in his actors. He evokes the quirkiest and the deepest that each can give his or her character. He uses his camera imaginatively for the small touch and the large. When Gielgud and Jackson meet, the poacher is in a field near us, just having killed a rabbit. The crusader, in a lane beyond and a little below him, doesn't see the killing. The poacher with his rabbit and the crusader with his pamphlets then move along companionably on different levels, the camera traveling with them, toward an inn. In larger scale Bridges ends the film with a near-repeat of his opening shot. At the start we see the hunting party in middle distance, moving slowly across a field from lower left toward upper right. One figure lingers behind, and we assume that it's Mason because we hear him commenting on the sound track. At the finish the party moves again in the same direction, this time bearing a litter with the body of a beater who has been accidentally killed. Again a figure lingers behind, and we assume it's Frazer because his comments close the film.

But *The Shooting Party* has a major trouble. The title itself warns us of it, and the picture confirms it. The idea of a shooting party as symbol is so familiar that, far from stimulating, it puts us on guard. The prime film example, of course, is the hunt in Renoir's *Rules of the Game*; Saura's *The Hunt* and the two films of Chekhov's *The Shooting Party* are further examples. The idea of a group of people put in a context of violence-as-pleasure in order to expose secrets in them, to epitomize differences in class, to foreshadow greater

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Almost You. New York Yuppies nearing the end of youth. A keen, deftly handled comic stiletto. (Reviewed 6/3/85)

The Sure Thing. Another comedy, fluffier than the above, about a cross-country college romance. Very pleasant. (4/8/85)

What Have I Done to Deserve This? Coolly amoral black comedy about Madrid today. Not quite amoral enough, but pretty fierce. (5/20/85)

Where's Picone? Giancarlo Giannini, as the essence of Naples, grifts his way in and out of a string of tight situations. Loose but savory. (5/27/85)

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violence, is by now tired.

The Bridges-Bond film makes matters worse through emphasis. All aspects of the symbol are virtually labeled. In Mason's opening narration, he speaks of his country's worrisome condition, and he hazards that a possible war with Germany may ennoble it. At the dinner table Frazer speaks of the end of an era, of a civilization. Social change is ticked off with the presence of a Jew in these august Anglican precincts. (A reminder of Galsworthy's play *Loyalties*.) One of the beaters is accidentally shot—by Fox, crazily eager to improve his hunt score—and the dying man is cradled by Mason. Through the film, this man has talked bitterly of the upper classes, yet his last words, in an aristocrat's arms, are "God save the British empire," as if death were giving him a prevision of Sarajevo.

Even more emphasis comes from the Hungarian count, who is much more haughty than the titled English. He and Mason's granddaughter, previously attracted to each other, are speaking after the death. "After all," says the count, "he was only a peasant." She replies, "The thing is, you see, that we all knew him." All bets are then off between this pair. The exchange is patently meant to suggest the immutable cruelty of the continent as against the basic decency of Britain, thus in an oblique way to predict the First World War. (To me, the Hungarian's remark was less patronizing than her sentimentality.)

After the film itself, we see "facts" about the future deaths in battle of several of these fictional characters. Epilogues of this kind are now too commonplace to help, especially when they try for last quick stabs of poignancy, and especially when they state the obvious. Who would not assume that some of the men we have seen, regardless of class or country, would be killed in the war?

That's the difficulty with *The Shooting Party*—its overriding fear that it is not making its points. A large amount of talent in all the arts and crafts of film have been invested here, and in themselves they provide much pleasure. But it's as if two different minds were struggling with each other. The mind that dealt with the actual making of the film is subtle; the mind that dealt with the thematic material is frightened and heavy. The symbol of the shooting party—in 1913!—could not really be made fresh. But if the film had been content to imply, without blackboard-pointer comments, it might have been much more affecting.

The hard choices in the liberation of the Jews.

THREE WHO MADE A REVOLUTION

BY CONOR CRUISE O'BRIEN

THE publication of these three books considerably enriches the literature on Zionism available in English. Regrettably, the enrichment is rather less than it might have been. The books about Ben-Gurion and Katznelson are translations from Hebrew originals, and both are quite drastic abridgments. In his introduction, Mr. Teveth says: "This work is a rendition in English of a rather weightier tome in Hebrew. The English version is distinguished from the Hebrew by an economy of expression and documentation, which I believe will be appreciated by the English reader." It seems a pity. Only those seriously interested in Zionism will read any of these books, and they are not likely to appreciate the economy. Surely a university press, when it finds a text worth translating, should translate it in full, and let the reader do such skipping as he chooses to.

Chaim Weizmann: The Making of a Zionist Leader by Jehuda Reinharz (Oxford University Press, 566 pp., $29.95)

Ben-Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs: From Peace to War by Shabtai Teveth (Oxford University Press, 234 pp., $17.95)

Berl: The Biography of a Socialist Zionist by Anita Shapira (Cambridge University Press, 400 pp., $29.95)

Not so the Weizmann book. *Chaim Weizmann* is the first volume of a long-awaited scholarly biography. Jehuda Reinharz, professor of modern Jewish history at Brandeis University, was selected in 1977 to write the biography along with Walter Laqueur, who later had to drop out of the project. The present volume takes the story only as far as the outbreak of the First World War; the period of Weizmann's major achievement is left for the projected second and final volume. But this volume whets the appetite for it. Its scholarship, obviously, is beyond question, but Reinharz has other qualities not always to be taken for granted in academic writing about politicians. He has a sure sense of his subject's political position (or political predicament) at any given time, and explains his political motivations convincingly. (Reinharz handsomely acknowledges his indebtedness to "insights and formulations" of the late R. H. S. Crossman, who was originally designated as Weizmann's biographer, and it may be in this area that Crossman's political experience has been helpful.) Reinharz's approach to his subject is respectful without being reverential, and never verges on the hagiographic. (The same is true of the Ben-Gurion book and also, though perhaps to a slightly lesser extent, of the Katznelson biography.) Indeed, Weizmann's admirers, who include this reviewer, are likely to be a little shocked by the prominence, in the portrait, of a few warts.

This study sheds a great deal of light, for example, on the fascinating subject of the political relationship between the young Weizmann and Theodor Herzl, the founder of the Zionist movement. Weizmann was not a very important figure in Zionism during Herzl's lifetime, but he was beginning to make his mark by means of a youth movement he founded, on which he based his so-called Democratic Faction within the Zionist movement. During Herzl's lifetime, Weizmann was no more than, as Reinharz puts it, "the leader of the Russian Zionist student colonies in the West." But Herzl took note of him, and he watched Herzl avidly. Herzl, for his part, could use him politically, and Weizmann could use Herzl's use of him.

Weizmann's Youth Conference in 1901 represented a challenge to Herzl's leadership, and some of Herzl's colleagues called on the leader to denounce the Youth Conference. This Herzl refrained from doing. Reinharz analyzes Herzl's reasons convincingly:

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Herzl had his own reasons for co-opting rather than further alienating the young Zionist intelligentsia. He considered the source of his troubles within the World Zionist Organization to be the vested interests and veteran leadership of the local organizations. Thus, any new leadership that arose might be preferable, and perhaps also more responsive, to his own influence.

Weizmann met Herzl, and a compromise was worked out. Reinharz comments:

As much as the results of the meeting attest to Weizmann's powers of persuasion, they also indicate Herzl's ability to defuse a potentially dangerous opposition before it got out of hand. Both showed themselves to be seasoned politicians who understood the advantages of eliminating unnecessary direct confrontation. . . .

The negotiations with Herzl reveal important characteristics in Weizmann. The young *Privat-Dozent* whose experience in the movement hitherto was mainly as a propagandist now showed that he was a first-rate tactician. Weizmann was essentially a pragmatic empiricist, not an opportunist, who believed in attaining the possible. He revealed an ability to maintain a flexible posture toward both the content of the ideas he represented as well as their method of implementation. He did not seek a final, decisive, and irrevocable break with the established leadership since he knew his own position and power base to be quite weak. Though he stood by his principles, at the same time he retained a skeptical attitude toward rigid ideological positions.

At the Fifth Zionist Congress, in December 1901, Weizmann's Democratic Faction staged an attack on the religious Zionists; when Herzl deflected the attack procedurally, the Democratic Faction, including Weizmann, walked out. Again Herzl was asked to intervene and again he refused. "Don't get upset," said Herzl. "Those are not the worst people amongst us." And at the final session of the Congress—which was still being boycotted—Herzl expressed his pleasure at the existence of "a youthful group, which is faithful, sometimes in a rather lively way." On the following day, Weizmann presented the members of his Democratic Faction to Herzl with the words: "Before you stands His Majesty's most loyal opposition."

In the great controversy that broke out at the Sixth Zionist Congress, at Basel in 1903, over the British government's offer of Uganda for Jewish settlement, Weizmann originally wished to support Herzl and accept the offer. He changed his mind, however, when he realized the strength of the resistance of the Russian Zionists. "Despite his sympathy with Herzl's position, Weizmann preferred being in the camp of the Russian Zionist leadership since it was his only chance to survive politically."

A little less than a year later, Herzl was dead, and on July 6, 1904, Weizmann wrote to his fiancée, Vera Khatzman: "I have had to experience a heavy blow . . . the death of *Herzl* . . . At this moment all the differences between us have disappeared, and I only have the image of a great creative worker in front of my eyes. . . . He has left us a frightening legacy. . . . I feel that a heavy burden has fallen on my shoulders. . . ." But about a week later Weizmann wrote on the same subject, with a significantly different emphasis, to Menachem Ussishkin, the leader of the Russian Zionists and Herzl's most implacable opponent. "One feels that a terrible burden has fallen on our shoulders. Herzl left a terrible legacy, but now less than ever is there time for tears. *Einigkeit macht stark*. I repeat once again: I am entirely at your disposal."

CHAIM WEIZMANN, COURTESY OF WEIZMANN ARCHIVES

And he was. It was as the trusted agent, among Western Zionists, of Ussishkin's Russian Zionists that Weizmann built up his own position as a force in world Zionism in the years after Herzl's death. It was with the support of Herzl's greatest opponent that Weizmann began to establish his claim to the mantle of Herzl. Both as a politician and as an artist, Herzl would have appreciated the irony.

The Balfour Declaration, Weizmann's greatest achievement, does not come within Reinharz's purview in this volume. But the first meeting between Balfour and Weizmann—on January 9, 1906—does. Reinharz is skeptical about the colorful account that Weizmann gives to this meeting in his autobiography, *Trial and Error*. Such skepticism is understandable. One of Weizmann's weaknesses was a tendency to fantasize. (For example, he gave Dorothy Rothschild a detailed account of how he personally helped to defend the Jewish quarter of Kishinev in April 1903—at a time when, as Reinharz points out, Weizmann was actually in Geneva.) But I am not convinced that the account of the meeting with Balfour in *Trial and Error* is seriously misleading. Reinharz casts doubt on it by pointing out that Weizmann's "record of the meeting the very same day of the interview is a great deal less dramatic and no doubt more accurate." In his autobiographical account, Weizmann sets out the arguments he used with Balfour. In the contemporary account he simply says, "I explained to him why this—'territorialism,' the substitution of Uganda for Palestine—was not possible." But Weizmann was writing to his fiancée, who knew what he would have had to say on that subject. She didn't have to be told. I see no reason to doubt that Weizmann was impressive—he always was, when he wanted to be—or that Balfour was impressed.

Reinharz makes the point that Balfour did not show any interest in Zionism, or meet Weizmann again, until December 1914. But a Zionism with no legitimate outlet other than Palestine was not a practical object for a British statesman at any time before Britain found itself at war with the Ottoman Empire. What was remarkable, rather,

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is how quickly Balfour met Weizmann afterward. It will be very interesting to see how Reinharz handles the preliminaries to the Balfour Declaration in his next volume.

SPOKESMEN for Ben-Gurion's party—Mapai, or what is now called the Labor Alignment—have tended, naturally enough, to idealize their founder in retrospect. This communicated itself to outside critics of Israel, after Likud came to power in 1977, and especially during the Lebanon war in 1982. Thus a writer in *The Times* of London during that war wrote of the moral decline he saw in Israel by comparing it with the days of Ben-Gurion. (This view of the matter happens to fit into the ancient grid through which the Christians have perceived the Jews: the Jews were once very holy, and are now very much not.)

The retrospectively idealized version of Ben-Gurion represents him as conciliatory in his approach to the Arab question—in sharp contrast to the approach of Begin's mentor, Vladimir Jabotinsky, Begin himself, and the Likud. Shabtai Teveth's valuable volume makes the contrast considerably less sharp than the idealized version does. In fact, the main difference between Ben-Gurion and Jabotinsky, in relation to the Palestinian Arabs, seems to have been that Jabotinsky was a lot more candid on the subject than Ben-Gurion (or Weizmann) judged it expedient to be. Jabotinsky himself was well aware of this. When, in 1936, a member of the Peel Commission suggested that Jabotinsky thought himself brainier than Ben-Gurion and Weizmann, Jabotinsky replied: "It is a great question whether it requires more 'brains' to be straightforward than not to be straightforward. It is a moot point, as I think you call it in English."

In his earliest public statements on the Arab question, as in his later ones, Ben-Gurion stressed the prosperity and "renewal" that the Zionist enterprise would bring to the Palestinian Arabs. His private thoughts—first recorded in the "Omaha papers," notes made in 1916 during his American tour—were more complex. Shabtai Teveth writes:

For although in his published articles Ben-Gurion denied any conflict between Arab and Jewish interests, he admitted secretly that "yes, there is this certain measure of Arab opposition." "But this can't stop us. First, *we did not come here to expell the Arabs*," but to build. This the Arabs "must understand," for "the Arabs themselves are incapable of such building." Second, "they don't have the power to expell us." Here Ben-Gurion analyzed the reasons for Arab incompetence: "The Arabs are not organized as a nation and they haven't one national party but many; some want to separate from Turkey while others are satisfied with things as they are, and believe that only tied to Turkey can they develop. But they have no national movement in our sense." Once the Arabs understood that they were powerless to be rid of the Jews, "then we can work together."

DAVID BEN-GURION

And if they refused? With this possibility in mind, Ben-Gurion advocated the reinforcement of the Yishuv with the volunteers of Hehalutz. In short, Ben-Gurion foresaw armed struggle between Jews and Arabs. "It is possible to come to terms with the Arabs. This is a matter of strategy," he wrote in his Omaha notes. And so it was just as possible, for tactical reasons, not to come to terms. In any event, this was a secondary question, since he believed that the attitude of the power ruling Palestine would determine all.

In the first years of the Mandate, Ben-Gurion believed—or at least toyed with the fancy—that the Palestine *fellahin* would become assimilated into the Jewish community, known as the Yishuv. (He believed the Palestinians to be at least partly of Jewish descent.) After the first outbreaks of Arab mob violence against Jews, in 1920 and again in 1921, the assimilation theory must have worn thin. Still, in public Ben-Gurion played down Arab hostility, and put all the blame for the outbreaks on the British authorities. As Teveth says:

> Ben-Gurion would have made a political calculation before settling on a public interpretation, with the welfare of the Yishuv in mind. Would he have chosen Jabotinsky's blunt approach, and declared that "a voluntary settlement between us and the Arabs in Palestine is unthinkable, now and in the foreseeable future"? To posit an irreconcilable conflict in this manner would have harmed the prospects of the Yishuv, for it would have deepened Arab hatred and could have cost the Jews the sympathy of world public opinion. No one was prepared to impose the Jews on the Arabs by brute force with Wilsonian talk of self-determination in the air. Ben-Gurion rejected Jabotinsky's demand for an "Iron Wall," that is, that only under the shield of an armed force could Zionism achieve its aim. In the event, and in the absence of a Jewish armed force, the British army would have to defend the Yishuv against implacable foes. But Ben-Gurion maintained that the land could not be won by reliance on others.
>
> "The homeland cannot be given as a gift," wrote Ben-Gurion. "It cannot be purchased like a concession through political contracts, bought with gold, or seized by force. The land can be earned only by building, by the sweat of one's brow." Ben-Gurion was not blind to what Jabotinsky saw; he already had written of the depth of Arab hatred for Zionism. But to reiterate this point and inscribe it as a principle of Zionist doctrine would have been pointless. He preferred a positive and beneficial tactic, one that burned no bridges and left open a chance for peace, however remote. It is difficult to establish Ben-Gurion's considerations with assurance, since his tactical denial of the real conflict had to be total to be convincing. In 1939, Ben-Gurion confessed that he often took positions on the Arab question for tactical reasons, and not out of conviction. This might well have been such an instance.

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By 1922 Ben-Gurion is acknowledging, in his diary, the existence of "an Arab national movement" waging "a national war" against the Zionists. In November 1929, after the widespread acts of Arab violence in that year, Ben-Gurion made the same acknowledgment, in the form of a warning, to a gathering of members of his party: "In a political sense, [the Arab movement] is a national movement."

In the early 1930s Ben-Gurion thought that it might be possible to come to some kind of terms with this Arab national movement, perhaps on a "cantonal" or "federal" basis, by which he meant, substantially, partition. Negotiations in fact occurred between Ben-Gurion and Arab representatives in Geneva in September 1934, but they culminated in a stinging public rebuff by the Arabs to Ben-Gurion—whom they said they had met only in order "to know the enemy."

After that Ben-Gurion gave up on negotiations with the Arabs, as long as the Jews in Palestine remained in a minority:

> And so on April 16, 1936, Ben-Gurion informed Mapai that he had reached the conclusion that ". . . there is no chance for an understanding with the Arabs unless we first reach an understanding with the English, by which we will become a preponderant force in Palestine. What can drive the Arabs to a mutual understanding with us? . . . *Facts*. . . . Only after we manage to establish a *great Jewish fact* in this country . . . only then will the precondition for discussion with the Arabs be met."

What Ben-Gurion had come to realize, after the total breakdown of the 1934 negotiations, was that there was no hope of Arab consent to unrestricted Jewish immigration. And once Hitler came to power in Germany, there was no way the leader of the Yishuv could accept restrictions on Jewish immigration to Palestine. As Ben-Gurion explained to Judah Magnes, the most ardent advocate of Arab-Jewish reconciliation:

> The difference between me and you is that you are ready to sacrifice immigration for peace, while I am not, though peace is dear to me. And even if I was prepared to make a concession, the Jews of Poland and Germany would not be, because they have no other option. For them immigration comes before peace.

On this, Teveth comments:

> Zionism was no longer a movement of absolute justice; it was, Ben-Gurion now believed, a movement of relative justice. The tragedy of the Jews outweighed the minor dispossession of the Arabs, and to that extent, Zionism remained for Ben-Gurion a moral force. Thus, although Zionism was peace-loving, immigration still came before peace. This was a slogan of struggle, and henceforth, Zionism was to rely much more on the desperate situation of the Jews in Europe as a moral prop. Concern for justice for the Arabs diminished. Rights became functions of tragedies; the greater the tragedy, the greater the rights it conferred on its victims. Few but the Arabs doubted that the Jewish tragedy was the greater.

BERL KATZNELSON, 1936

Ben-Gurion no longer hoped for any concrete results from talks with Arabs. All the same, he had three long talks with George Antonius, a prominent Arab intellectual and author of *The Arab Awakening*, in April 1936. "Readiness for talks was a weapon Ben-Gurion could brandish in his campaign for the support of British public opinion," Teveth writes. "But from now on, there would be no more pursuit of compromise. The actual talking had come to an end."

In a letter in November 1937 to Moshe Sharrett, Ben-Gurion showed his complete understanding of Arab resistance to Jewish immigration: "Were I an Arab," he wrote,

> . . . an Arab with nationalist political consciousness . . . I would rise up against an immigration liable sometime in the future to hand the country and all of its Arab inhabitants over to Jewish rule. What Arab cannot do his math and understand that immigration at the rate of 60,000 a year means a Jewish state in all of Palestine?

Finally in February 1938, with a greatly enlarged Yishuv behind him, Ben-Gurion, in a conversation with the British high commissioner, Harold MacMichael, could be as candid as Jabotinsky. "Almost every Arab," he said, opposed Zionism "because he is an Arab, because he is a Muslim, because he dislikes foreigners, and because we are hateful to him in every way."

In his epilogue, Teveth concludes:

> A careful comparison of Ben-Gurion's public and private positions leads inexorably to the conclusion that this twenty-year denial of the conflict was a calculated tactic, born of pragmatism rather than profundity of conviction. The idea that Jews and Arabs could reconcile their differences through class solidarity, a notion he championed between 1919 and 1929, was a delaying tactic. Once the Yishuv had gained strength, Ben-Gurion abandoned it. The belief in a compromise solution, which Ben-Gurion professed for the seven years between 1929 and 1936, was also a tactic, designed to win continued British support for Zionism. The only genuine convictions that underlay Ben-Gurion's approach to the Arab question were two: that the support of the power that ruled Palestine was more important to Zionism than any agreement with the Arabs, and that the Arabs would reconcile themselves to the Jewish presence only after they conceded their inability to destroy it.

BERL KATZNELSON became one of the leading members of the Second Aliyah, the critical wave of Jewish immigration to Palestine between 1904 and 1915, and his influence was strongly felt also by the members of the Third Aliyah (1919-1923). These were the immigrations that did most to shape the character of Israel. Katznelson, by inclination and personality, was one of the great character-molders, though he later came to have some doubts about the nature of his achievement. He did much, along with Ben-Gurion, to shape

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the principal institutions of Labor Zionism—the political party Ahdut ha-Avoda, later Mapai, and the trade union the Histadrut. Through the Hebrew newspaper *Davar*, which he did most to found and which he personally controlled, and the Hebrew publishing house Am Oved, which he also founded and ran, he exercised a unique cultural influence over the Yishuv. Katznelson admired and generally followed Ben-Gurion, but he had little use either for Ben-Gurion's gestures in the direction of the Arabs or for his desire, at certain times, to impress the British. In fact Katznelson disliked Gentiles of all descriptions. "No non-Jews," says Anita Shapira, "ever entered his home." He was inclined to sarcasm, which he used with effective restraint, and he applied this gift against Zionists in the Diaspora who argued for rapprochement with the Arabs. He described one proposal as "the outcome of the uncomfortable situation of our comrades who often come into contact with the outside world and must explain our case there."

Yet Katznelson liked and admired Chaim Weizmann, the greatest of the explainers to the outside world, whom he considered the foremost Zionist of his day. Still, he could have his little dig at Weizmann, too. At one meeting in 1936, comparing his own Zionist role with Weizmann's, he said:

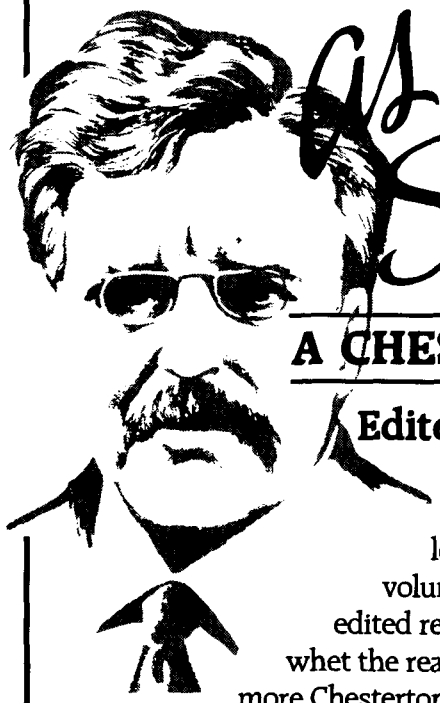
> When a patient is gravely ill, they bring him a great professor and he does what he can. But by the professor's side stands a Jew, a poor relation, and he too does what he can—he recites Psalms. I have come to recite Psalms by the professor's side.

KATZNELSON and his *Davar* were, of course, in the thick of Labor's fight in the 1930s against Jabotinsky and his Revisionists. Katznelson compared Jabotinsky's loud candor and open demand for a Jewish state to "a man walking through a forest full of bears, shouting at the top of his lungs, thereby attracting the attention of the predators." (It was a remark that made Jabotinsky tear up his delegate's card and walk out of the meeting.) Yet Katznelson was to be the first Labor leader to follow Jabotinsky's example and call openly for a Jewish state. This was in December 1940 at a Zionist conference at Ayanot. Ben-Gurion did not formulate that demand publicly until nearly 18 months later, at the famous Biltmore Conference of May 1942.

Both Jabotinsky and Katznelson had an exceptionally early and keen sense of the dimensions of the catastrophe impending in Europe. Indeed, Katznelson may well have acquired his sense of it from Jabotinsky, with whom he had several long and painful meetings in London in late August 1939, just after the conclusion of the German-Soviet Pact. Katznelson reported on these conversations to Mapai's Central Committee on September 21, 1939. In their last conversation, as Katznelson recalled it, Jabotinsky had said, sadly and bitterly: "You have won. You have America, the rich Jews. I had only poor Polish Jewry, and now it is gone. I have lost the game."

A little more than a year later—at the same conference at which he called, like Jabotinsky, for a Jewish state—Katznelson spoke of European Jewry, as Jabotinsky (now dead) had, as already condemned to death:

> "The essence of Zionist awareness must be that what existed in Vienna—will never return, what existed in Berlin will never return, nor in Prague, and what we had in Warsaw and Lodz—is finished, and we must realize this! . . .
>
> "And I declare," he reiterated with great emphasis, "that the fate of European Jewry is sealed, not because I wish it to be so, but because cruel destiny has so determined."



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In his last years Katznelson suffered intensely, not only because of what was happening to the Jews in Europe, but because of the failure of young Jews in Palestine to identify with European Jews. Am Oved had published a series of "Letters from the Ghetto," but the book was not in demand. "I do not think," wrote Katznelson in June 1944, "that these terrible events, which we are all consciously aware of, are being experienced on the personal level, as part of our own destiny." Anita Shapira adds:

> Berl did not absolve himself of responsibility for this alienation. As the mentor of the movement, who had left his indelible stamp on its consciousness through lectures, seminars and talks, he had shared in creating it. The denial of the Diaspora, which implied, on the one hand, rejection of the Jewish way of life in the Diaspora, and, on the other, denial of the possibility of the continued existence of the Jewish people there, was one of the underlying tenets of Zionism. It had, however, been interpreted by both teachers and students as a rejection of the *Jewish people* in the Diaspora, thus inevitably enhancing the specific value of the new tribe growing up in Palestine. This had not been the intention of the Second Aliyah teachers. In their revolt against their own past, their home towns and villages had appeared to them as the epitome of ugliness and degradation. They were well aware, however, that this was not the whole truth, and even while attacking their own background, they had remained inextricably bound to it, and through it to the fabric of Jewish life. The young generation in Palestine did not regard their origins in the same fashion. Their associations lacked the existential dimension, absorbed with mother's milk, with Sabbath and festival *rituals, with the dread of pogroms, with* the grief which followed in their wake. For them, identification was an intellectual process, in the course of which the Jewish people was weighed and found wanting. For the young the Diaspora was everything against which their parents had rebelled. The denial of the Diaspora in Berl's generation implied the duty to rescue the Jewish people; for young people bred in Palestine it meant the severing of the link binding them to the Jewish people and to Jewish history. In his twilight years Berl witnessed the utter failure of the education of "the children of Zionism." The estrangement between the new Jewish people in Palestine and the suffering Jewish people elsewhere was a constant reminder to him of his own failure.

It may well be that here, too, in Katznelson's sense of failure concerning "the children of Zionism," there is a reflection of those last conversations with Jabotinsky. Jabotinsky had accused Mapai of indifference to the plight of the Jewish masses in Europe. "For me," he had told Katznelson, "Zionism is the concern of those Jews who are not in Palestine."

THESE BOOKS are works of lucid, honest scholarship. Their combined effect is bleak. We are very far here from the sugar versions of the Zionist pioneers as some kind of all-purpose "idealists." Weizmann, Ben-Gurion, and Katznelson were indeed all idealists, but they were not all-purpose idealists. Their ideal was a Zionist ideal (somewhat differently conceived by each one) to which they dedicated their whole lives. To that ideal, however, they were prepared to subordinate other ideals, if they found them to be in conflict. All three were Russian Jews who grew up under an anti-Semitic regime. They all lived to see an unimaginably intensified anti-Semitism explode throughout Europe and engulf the European Jews. And they were all conscious of the fact that the environment in which most of the survivors among the Jews of the Old World lived—in the Middle East and especially in Palestine—had become no less hostile to the Jews and their state than the Russia in which they were born had been to the Jews in the ghetto. They lived all their mature lives with the consciousness of being among the leaders of besieged people. And they developed qualities appropriate to the leaders of besieged people: extreme alertness, intellectual lucidity, pragmatism, resourcefulness (including reliance, where necessary, on ruse), and a concentrated will toward collective survival.

They were well aware, of course, that those who besieged the Jews in the Middle East had done nothing to create the predicament, and finally the horror, which had brought the Jews to the Middle East in the 19th and 20th centuries. Europeans, not Arabs, had done all that. But what to do with the awareness that that was so? Take it back to Europe, where it belongs, was essentially the Arab answer. But neither these men, nor those whom they led, were prepared to do that. Nor were they prepared to dismantle the Jewish state, the need for which they felt had been proved for all time by the Nazis.

The demand that the Jewish state be dismantled is still at the top of the

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agenda of most Palestinian Arabs, and of most other Arabs. Thus the work of Weizmann, of Ben-Gurion, of Katznelson, of all the others who gathered at the call of the author of *Der Judenstaat*, is subject to a challenge over which compromise is not possible. The Jewish state will either be or not be. These books leave me with an enhanced sense of the harshness of the Zionist predicament, and of the extra measure of hardness in certain characters molded by that predicament. They also leave me with even less faith than before in the possibility of the kind of comprehensive Arab-Israeli settlement for which so many Western politicians and publicists call, which, when stripped down to its essentials, requires a negotiated agreement between people who are committed to the preservation of the Jewish state and people who are committed to its destruction.

FAULT LINES

Slow Homecoming
by Peter Handke
translated by Ralph Manheim

(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 279 pp., $16.95)

"I am working on the secret of the world," declares the narrator of one of the three fictions—perhaps "three philosophical parables" would be a more adequate term—that make up Peter Handke's most recent book. The author, who made his first big splash in 1966 (at the age of 24) with the play *Offending the Audience*, has come a long way since that time. The distance between "offending the audience" and "working on the secret of the world" is a measure of both maturity and ambition. Indeed, the title of *Slow Homecoming*, with its many references to the journeys of the book's characters, could also serve as an apt description of Handke's own creative journey. It has been, in fact, a gradual return to the demanding tradition of the great Austrian novelists of our century, Robert Musil or Hermann Broch, whose work, for all its artistic novelty, was likewise spurred by an obsession with metaphysics.

In the book itself, the notion of "homecoming" acquires several different meanings. The first story, "The Long Way Around," introduces this concept through the creation of a fictional plot, which has perhaps the most to do with homecoming in its literal sense. The main character, Valentin Sorger, a geologist from Europe who is doing field work on the configurations of the earth near the Arctic Circle, is yet another modern incarnation of Odysseus. His Troy is an Alaskan village, where he immerses himself in the realm of natural objects, trying

> to take the environing world seriously in the least of its forms—a groove in the rock, a change of color in the mud, a wind-blown pile of sand at the foot of a plant—as seriously as only a child can do, in order to keep himself, who scarcely belonged anywhere, who was nowhere at home, together.

Though he is initially more or less reconciled to his rootlessness, to his "constant whereverness," and even enjoys "the intoxication of being forever alone," Sorger begins to yearn for his Ithaca, which, for him, means not only a geographic return to Europe but also a social return to human community, a historical return to the continuity of time, and a semantic return to unrestricted communication with others. In fact, even in his Alaskan solitude he has occasionally had to dabble in the lives of other people—his Indian lover, his European research partner—and thus has developed a sense of belonging and caring. (Incidentally, in German "sorgen" means precisely "to care.") Now, having abruptly decided to end his Northern adventure, he makes his "long way around" the globe, toward the Ithaca of his European home.

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York City—and finds himself, through accidental encounters with friends and strangers, "back in the game of the world again." Throughout the journey he becomes increasingly aware that his only true goal is "to find his fellows" wherever they are, and thus to "lay claim to the world and to this century." In other words, he gropes for "a faith that would give him form." At last, in a Manhattan coffee shop, he experiences a flash of mystical illumination, "a law-giving moment" in which he realizes the essence of both his uniqueness and his participation in the human world and the process of history. At this point, he is genuinely ready to return to "the world of names," to the sphere of man-made forms that make communication and belonging possible.

The authorial narrator, who presents Sorger's story in an apparently traditional third-person account (yet highly original in its combination of stylistic fragmentation and concision), becomes a first-person narrator-character in the book's next section, "The Lesson of Mont Sainte-Victoire." This is, to all intents and purposes, an autobiographical story about the conception of the idea of "The Long Way Around." At the same time, this is also another, nonfictional variation upon the same theme—the theme of the relationship between the metaphysical Law inherent in the world and the Form in which the human intellect tries to express the essence of this Law. Significantly, the point of departure is the author's fascination with another artist's work. In studying the artistic *réalisations* of Paul Cézanne and comparing them with the actual landscapes of Provence (a secondary source of the same kind of fascination is Edward Hopper and his Cape Cod paintings), the narrator learns to recognize how reality "becomes nameable" and thus reveals our "kinship with other, unknown lives." Just as in the preceding story, to enter "the world of names" means here to participate in human history and human community; to write means, in the most profound sense of the word, to love.

After the high-strung, at times almost mystical, tone of the book's first two parts, the third one, "Child Story," might seem anticlimactic. At first glance, it seems to be a quite realistic account of family troubles—the story of a father who virtually single-handedly copes with all sorts of problems in bringing up his daughter during the first ten years of her life. Moreover, the relationship between this story and the previous two is not immediately clear. The main character, again presented in a third-person narrative, and called simply "the adult," apparently has little in common with either Sorger or the authorial narrator. Yet a closer look reveals a strong thematic thread that binds the three stories together and, despite all their differences, makes of them an artistic whole. What they share is, again, the motif of "homecoming," of finding the way to one's Ithaca by trying to discover the "universal law" of existence and to think out forms capable of communicating this discovery to others.

IN SORGER'S STORY, the metaphor for this problem is the image of a journey through geographic space and historical time, from Arctic primordiality to European modernity. In "Child Story" we find an analogous metaphor, only this time the journey is through the time of childhood, from the "oneness" of infancy to the complexity inherent in one's inevitable participation in society and history (even as a child, the girl is perceived, while abroad, as a *German* child, and thus becomes unknowingly an heir to a certain historic legacy). The father and his daughter are characterized as "a pair of conspirators" who have to deal with the outer world together; but in the eyes of "the adult," it is the child who embodies "an important law, which he himself had either forgotten or never known." Just as Cézanne—an archetypal artist who made reality "nameable"—is called "the teacher of mankind" in the previous story, so the child is shown here as another "personal teacher" whose very existence seems to the parent "the measure of truth."

Peter Handke's book, brimming with existential questions and yet coolly precise—this stylistic precision is exceptionally well rendered in Ralph Manheim's exquisite translation—is one of those works of literature that tell as much about their authors as their characters. Like Flaubert, Handke has the right to say: Sorger (or "the adult") *c'est moi*. At the outset of the third story, the main character makes a significant decision—after the birth of his daughter he severs his ties with a certain political group, of which we know only that it was characterized by its col-

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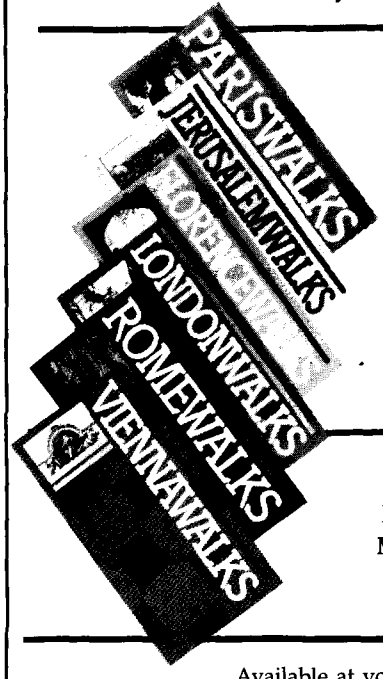

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lectivist spirit and utopian belief in the mechanisms of "history." In fact, the baby's birth becomes for the father "a pretext for turning his back on history."

This decision—the decision to see mankind's history as condensed in the living, breathing individual, instead of subordinating the individual to History meant as some abstract, anonymous force—is, I think, deeply symbolic, not only for Handke himself, but also (one hopes) for the generation of West European writers he represents. "Turning one's back on history" is not to be taken literally, of course; the heroes of all three stories, after all, accept the human heritage and choose to contribute to it rather than enclosing themselves within the walls of their individual selves. What Handke expresses by "turning one's back" is rather his contempt for, in his own words, "those non-beings who need history for their lives." As in a pocket mirror, the disillusionment of our age is reflected in this brief phrase.

STANISLAW BARANCZAK

Stanislaw Baranczak, a Polish author who came to the United States in 1981, is now professor of Polish literature at Harvard University.

RENOVATING THE WHITE HOUSE

The Personal President: Power Invested, Promise Unfulfilled by Theodore J. Lowi

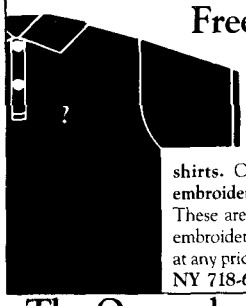
(Cornell University Press, 224 pp., $19.95)

"The President needs help." That cri de coeur in the opening sentence of the 1936 report of the President's Committee on Administrative Management has set the agenda of our governmental system ever since. For nearly half a century, declares Theodore J. Lowi, John L. Senior Professor of American Institutions at Cornell University and author of the well-regarded *The End of Liberalism*, we have put our faith in building up the presidency. The corps of six senior aides that FDR obtained from a reluctant Congress toward the end of his second term grew to more than 200 under Truman, over 400 under Eisenhower, close to 600 in the Nixon administration, while Jimmy Carter, who professed to wish to scale down the White House, built what may have been the largest staff of all. Yet even in the 1980s political analysts continue to voice the old refrain, "The President needs help."

All wrong, Professor Lowi says. We have in the course of one generation concentrated a monstrous amount of power in the White House, while making demands on the presidency that no chief executive can hope to meet, he asserts. That frightening development has come about not through executive usurpation, but because Congress has delegated its authority to the president and the Supreme Court has capitulated. The consequence has been the emergence of a "plebiscitary presidency" with neither Congress nor the party system any longer able to exercise a mediating function.

In a fine frenzy of alliteration, Lowi describes the plebiscitary presidency as "pathological, paranoid, and perverse." Since the chief executive can neither govern nor satisfy the excessive popular expectations, he is reduced to behaving like a latter-day Wizard of Oz who hopes to get by on appearances. Driven to desperation by the unreasonable demands made on him, he will inevitably resort to "lying in state." Indeed, Lowi remarks, "Deceit is inherent in the present structure. . . . Deceit will always be used to save the president as well as to defend the fundamental interests of the state." Watergate was no aberration, he claims. "In every respect other than the extent of illegal activities, there is a Watergate of some kind every day in the life of a president."

In a manner that brings to mind Henry and Brooks Adams's *The Degradation of the Democratic Dogma*, Lowi spins out a bleak theory of American history that



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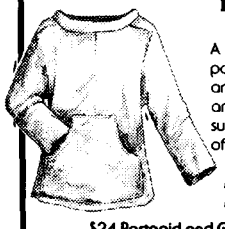

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seeks to account for how we came to this sorry pass. He contends that there have been "three quite distinct regimes" in America since 1789: "the traditional system," which lasted until the Great Depression; "the New Deal transition" of the age of Roosevelt; and beginning in 1961, the contemporary order, which he designates the "Second Republic." The traditional system is the one that Lowi most admires, for it was faithful to the intent of the Founding Fathers to establish "congressional dominance," a tendency that the rise of political parties reinforced. The Second Republic, on the other hand, has featured the elephantine growth of the federal bureaucracy, accompanied by "the sacrifice of the Separation of Powers and the two-party system."

YET, paradoxically, the presidents in the Second Republic and in the transition to it have not benefited from the power they have accumulated. For almost all of FDR's successors, "the presidency has been something of a disaster," he insists. "Between 1946 and 1980 five of the seven presidents were defined as failures: each was retired from office and from politics by reason of unacceptability to his own party as well as to the public at large." Eisenhower, he writes, was the only "clear exception," for Kennedy's reign was cut short at a point when he had to go to Texas to extricate himself from "political hot water."

Nor does Lowi anticipate that Ronald Reagan will triumph where others have failed. Lowi shares Reagan's view that government is not an answer to our problems; government is itself the problem. Indeed, he notes that he said this as far back as 1969, in the first edition of *The End of Liberalism*. Unhappily, he adds, Reagan has "enlarged the plebiscitary presidency more than most of his predecessors," and has thus sown the seeds of the disaster that awaits him. "For his encore, President Reagan is going to have to be lucky enough to have four more years of prosperity and peace and to make personal choices to which this prosperity and peace will be credited," he states. Even if, against all odds, Reagan achieves those goals, his performance will still not be enough, for the excessive expectations of the American people will devour him. "Having enjoyed credit beyond desert for putting the world to rights, both the person and the presidency will have to accept blame for any wrong that may come," he maintains. "Neither verdict is just, but what is justice to masses whose social contract is consent in return for services?"

Lowi's remedy for our plight derives directly from his theory of history. "Since building up the presidency has not met the problem of presidential capacity to govern," he reasons, "the time has come to consider building it down." One way to depersonalize the Oval Office, he says, would be to require every aspirant for the presidential nomination to publish a list of 20 or more persons from whom he would choose his main officials, a stipulation that would enhance collective responsibility. But the best way to build down the presidency, Lowi contends, would be by invigorating the party system. Unlike many other commentators, however, he does not rely upon strengthening the two-party system; nor, though he wants to make the presidency "more of a parliamentary office," is Great Britain his model. On the contrary, he advocates the development of a multiparty system, and he would fashion it along the lines of France's Fifth Republic, which "established a better balance than we have." Such a change, he believes, "would constitute something of a return to the original intent of the Founders' design," for it would result in the selection of the president by the House of Representatives.

LOWI DOES NOT appear to take any of these specific recommendations very seriously, for he gives them less than five pages and does not examine the difficulties in winning acceptance of them. He can hardly be unaware that there is not the slightest harbinger today of a multiparty system or the least evidence that anyone but he has any enthusiasm for leaving the choice of the president to the House of Representatives. Nor can he fail to be sensitive to the manifold difficulties of, not to mention objections to, obliging every presidential candidate to win consent at the outset, at a time of extraordinary political fluidity, of some two dozen notables to serve under him.

Lowi is more inclined to think that the presidency will be "turned into a more parliamentary office" by presidential initiative. He concedes that "presidents who are products of the present system are also unlikely to try to change it." But perhaps one of them will "come to recognize its inherent pathologies." A president who did have this capacity for recognition would try to "build down the presidency" by vetoing bills that delegated responsibilities to him that he could not carry out. To accomplish this change, "the president must simply make an analysis of the situation roughly similar to the analysis in this book." In short, Lowi, who deplores our reliance on the presidency, ends up turning to the president to make the most fundamental of changes in our national government.

SOME READERS of *The Personal President* may be less troubled by his prescriptions than by the historical analysis. It may surprise students of Jefferson, Jackson, Polk, and Lincoln to learn that "in the nineteenth century, chief executives were chief of very little and executive of even less," and it may startle scholars of the Louisiana Purchase, the War of 1812, the Monroe Doctrine, the Mexican War, and the acquisition of an overseas empire to read that "the only major moves in foreign policy during the entire century concerned the tariff." Historians who remember the Theodore Roosevelt who intervened in Santo Domingo and "took Panama" may have a hard time regarding the recent forays into Grenada and Lebanon as proof of the pathology of the post-1960 presidency, and those who recall Woodrow Wilson's circuit of the country on behalf of the League of Nations are not likely to conclude that appeals by the presidents over the heads of Congress to the people began in the "Second Republic." Finally, one would hope to see Lowi demonstrate at greater length than he has permitted himself in this short book that the era of "Congressional dominance" and smoke-filled rooms resulted in superior governance.

Yet if there are aspects of Lowi's book that not everyone will find persuasive, he does well to ask us to reflect on whether the institution of the presidency is all that we would want it to be. No one who has witnessed the reckless way in which executive power was exercised in Southeast Asia or who lived through the Watergate disaster can fail to be troubled by the potential for evil in the imperial presidency. And it is singular that as we approach the bicentennial of the Constitution, not many months away, so few are following Lowi's example of raising hard ques-

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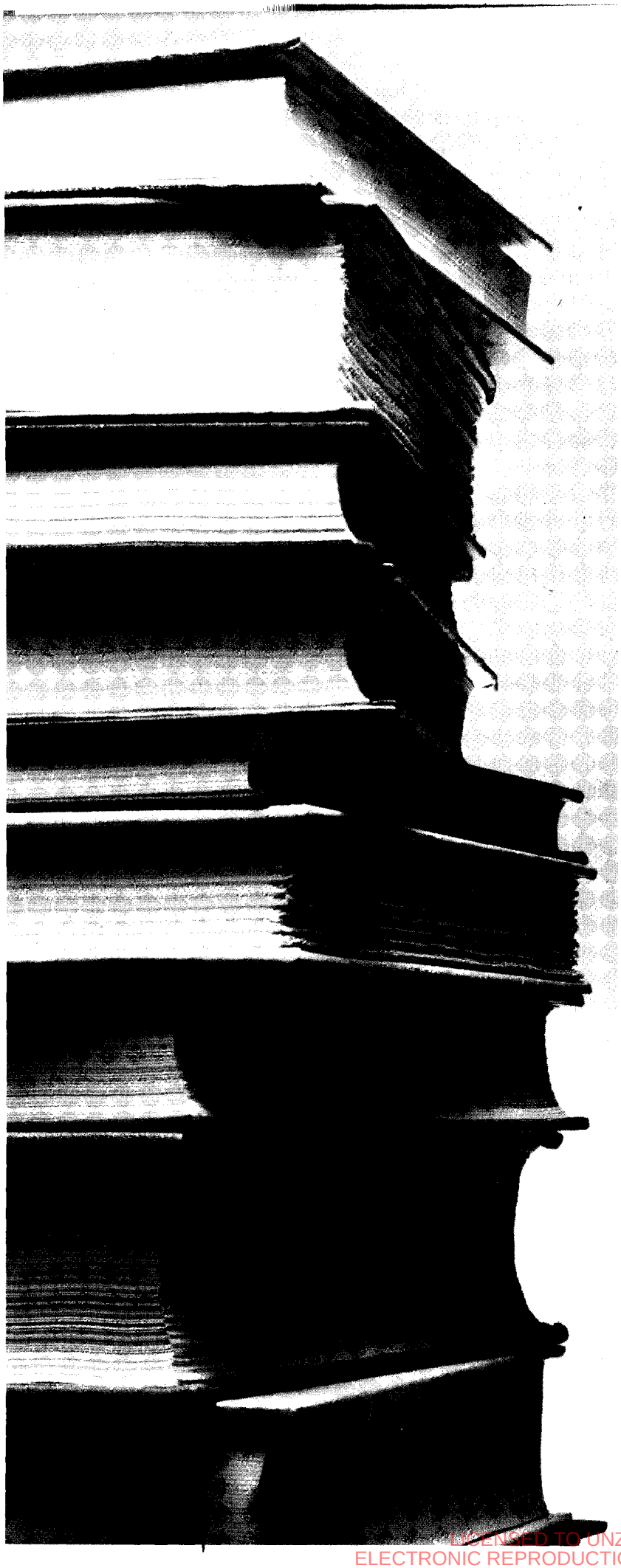

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tions about the American political system.

When those questions are aired, however, it is by no means clear that, despite all of our recent experience, we will be ready to abandon our search for a natural leader in the FDR mold. For if we have learned that the White House can be a center of boundless mischief, we have also learned that it can be a fulcrum for desirable social change in a way that neither Congress nor the corporate boardroom often is. No one has said that better than Lowi himself, who observes:

> A presidency built on initiatives and democratization can be a source of great benefits to society. It gives us the energy Hamilton said was needed in the executive. It makes the national government more sensitive to a variety of needs than it could otherwise possibly be. And it contributes an element of expansiveness, a tendency a government probably needs to have in a society as expansive as ours.

WILLIAM E. LEUCHTENBURG

William E. Leuchtenburg, William Rand Kenan Professor of History at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, is the author of *In the Shadow of FDR: From Harry Truman to Ronald Reagan* (Cornell University Press).

THE HERO OF HUMANISM

Irving Babbitt: An Intellectual Study by Thomas E. Nevin

(The University of North Carolina Press, 205 pp., $20)

"On the whole one feels as if one were straining one's lungs to be heard by a small audience sitting at the back of a great half-lighted hall," Paul Elmer More wrote to his friend Irving Babbitt in 1913. "There has been some recognition in this country; and the coupling of our names as engaged in the same campaign is a good sign—but the audience is very small and the hall very large."

The campaign More referred to was Humanism, the audience (which stayed small) mostly academics or traditionalists who shared More's and Babbitt's aversion to the vandals of modernism. The "New Humanists," as they came to be called, had their moment in the limelight during the cultural wars of the late 1920s and pretty well faded out of the picture after 1930. Today neither of its two principal spokesmen is exactly a household word. More, an undeservedly neglected essayist and literary critic, surfaces occasionally in scholarly discussions, but he has received little serious attention since Arthur H. Dakin's first-rate study published 35 years ago. Babbitt, his learned and pugilistic compatriot, and once a prime target of the "young intellectuals" in the 1910s and 1920s, has fared even less well. Although he figures prominently in J. D. Hoeveler's informative book *The New Humanism*, by far the best account of the Humanist movement as a whole, Thomas Nevin's study is the first really satisfactory full-length examination of Babbitt's mind and intellectual background, replete with an illuminating set of notes and a useful bibliographical essay.

Babbitt's unfriendly contemporaries saw him as a dogmatic authoritarian and latter-day Puritan, predictably hostile to any literary or intellectual tendency that challenged his reactionary prescriptions. Whether Sinclair Lewis had him in mind when he invented George F. Babbitt, the solid citizen of Zenith (he later mocked the "chilly enthusiasms" of the New Humanists in his Nobel Prize address), there was a certain irony, as Harry Levin has pointed out, in giving his arch philistine the surname of a withering critic of democratic culture. That Babbitt was something other than the leader of what Lewis called a "nebulous cult" is borne out in Nevin's thoroughly researched, dispassionate, and tautly written essay.

His Babbitt has little in common with the super-refined New England Brahmins and might better be described as an American "original" or self-made scholar. Young Irving was virtually abandoned by his cloud-cuckoo father, "E. D. Babbitt, D. M.," writer and publisher of health manuals with titles like *Vital Magnetism, The Life-Fountain.* Motherless at 11, he sold newspapers in New York City, lived with relatives in Ohio, and had a brush with the "real world" as farm worker, Wyoming ranch hand, and Cincinnati police reporter before entering Harvard. From his graduation in 1889 until his death in 1933, he bucked what seemed to him the dangerous fallacies of his times: sentimental humanitarianism, sodden materialism, and ignorance of (and contempt for) the experience of the past. The generations of Harvard students who heard him descant on self-restraint and inner discipline were generally more impressed by his learning and powerful personality than by his message.

There is something quixotic in Babbitt's intransigence. He was not conventionally religious and to the regret of his devoted friend More and his most illustrious student, T. S. Eliot, he trusted in the power of the human will to attain ethical insight without the help of theistic props. Nor was he conservative enough to satisfy the business and political establishment, whose zealotry and incompetence he roughly denounced. Devotees of Nietzsche, William James, Bergson, Freud, and Marx among the insurgent literary community, both the cultural nationalists and the aesthetic formalists, considered him an anachronism—a judgment with which he half agreed. He felt too "out of touch with the contemporary situation," he ruefully confided to More, to make much of a dent on his countrymen.

NEVIN accepts Babbitt's statement about himself, but it is only one of many virtues of his book that he looks behind the public stereotype to the private man revealed in his 40-year correspondence with More and in his major works. Babbitt's views, according to More, were "already formed and fixed" when he met him in 1892. *Literature and the American College* (1908), an Arnoldian defense of classical education and a caustic critique of the "atomistic" elective system of President Eliot's Harvard, in essence outlined the program of the New Humanism Babbitt was to promulgate for the rest of his life. In *The New Laokoön: An Essay on the Confusion of the Arts* (1910), he attacked the flimsy impressionism of "aesthetes and dilettantes, the last effete representatives of

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romanticism," and pressed the assault with greater acuteness and learning in *The Masters of French Criticism* (1912), a series of "case studies," Nevin calls them, in which he measured the deviations of the "masters" from "his humanistic standard." *Rousseau and Romanticism* (1919), his most popular and widely debated book, blamed a good part of the world's moral and intellectual blight on the sophisms of "the great father of radicalism." *Democracy and Leadership* (1924) was among other things a dismal comment on American democratic theory and practice and the "trifling brands of the human species" they were likely to produce.

A PROFESSOR OF classics, and well acquainted with German and French literature and thought, Nevin is able to trace the converging lines of Babbitt's wide-ranging and eclectic learning. He shows what Babbitt took from his mentors and sustainers, how he confronted them without awe or flunkyism and wove strands of their thought into his humanist fabric: Aristotle's critical spirit, Plato's philosopher kings, Confucius's "just man," Pascal's faith in man's superiority over brute nature, Goethe's "humanistic insistence upon earth-bound virtue," Burke's aim to make "the experience of the past" act "as a living force upon the present," Arnold's classicism and call for standards, Sainte-Beuve's "perfect tact and measure and good sense," and Emerson's dichotomy of "man" and "thing."

Babbitt employed these concepts in his lifelong crusade against the drift of Bacon's scientific positivism and Rousseau's romanticism, influences that together, he believed, brought about the disintegration of "traditional disciplines, whether humanistic or religious." The former subordinated human will to natural law, and thereby "unkinged" man; the latter evaded individual and moral responsibility by foisting the world's ills on society and outrageously flattering human nature. Nevin puts it neatly: "Babbitt saw a confluence between scientism and sentimentalism in that both were naturalistic drives for power under the guise or illusion of service to humankind." "Humanitarianism" was the monstrous outgrowth of this union, an indiscriminate sentimentalism exemplified for Babbitt in the poet Schiller's yearning to "clasp the millions to his bosom," and bestow "a kiss upon the whole world." In place of this flabby "promiscuous benevolence," Babbitt offered Humanism's strenuous program for self-perfection and "disciplined and selective sympathy."

Yet, as Nevin reminds us, Babbitt blamed the excesses promoted by unselective sympathizers like Rousseau on the authoritarian dogmas they were reacting against. Out of repression, either religious or political, came a counter laxity, just as out of unchecked impulse came nationalism, imperialism, and tyranny. Babbitt thought that American democracy, given its dubious ideological antecedents and evangelical politics, was all too susceptible to cant. Under such leaders as Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, it had already become "a form of absolutism." He called Americans "the most pacifistic and least peaceful of people." They espoused the "religion of country," the "most dangerous of sham religions of the modern age," and backed President Wilson's "mission" to impose peace by force on "the wicked Europeans." Such national lapses bore out one of his persistent contentions: even the worthiest principle needs to be "humanized," or "tempered," by its opposite.

THAT WAS NOT a popular dialectic in his day, nor is it in ours. Still, it does not begin to account for his current remoteness. More obvious reasons suggest themselves. His almost exclusive concern with ethical rather than with aesthetic values is out of tune with contemporary literary criticism. He looked down on novels, particularly modern novels (he found them formless and diffuse as well as degrading), and showed little interest in modern poetry. Moreover, his writing was less felicitous than his talk. According to More, his books had "a rotary motion," and he was inclined "to crowd his whole thesis, at least implicitly, into each single paragraph." And for a man who faulted reformers, labor unions, and big capitalists, he knew precious little about technological change or the machinery of government. Walter Lippmann, then his student, justly rebuked him in a letter for talking nonsense about socialism and economics, and for prejudicing his classes against ideas that, whether right or wrong, demanded "the most fair minded attention." Most of the time Babbitt stuck to what he knew, but he strayed from the possible when he set up his lofty standards of conduct and proposed the collective wisdom of his classical masters as the basis of a cosmopolitan transcultural ruling elite for all times and all societies.

Even so, the moralist who declared himself content to forgo recognition if it meant "flattering the enormous humanitarian illusions of the age" was not an inflexible standpatter, and it's easy to see why his brand of Toryism finds little favor with right-wing conservatives of the Manichaean persuasion. He had no patience with hard formulas, no trust in those who, in the name of order, despotically clamped the past on the present and, in Nevin's words, "mistook the ghost of tradition for its spirit." Demagogues, heresy-hunters, jingoists, and plutocrats get short shrift in his pages. Respecting "heroic capacities" of America's industrial magnates, Babbitt nonetheless questioned their ultimate social value until they had liberalized "their own souls" and got themselves "rightly educated." Their pursuit of efficiency, he thought, turned operatives into "mere cogs in some vast machine." Their commercialism placed its "great greasy paws" on the whole culture to the point where democracy itself might be defined as "standardization and commercialized melodrama."

The private Babbitt that emerges from Nevin's intellectual study alters only a little his austere public visage. In a gentle reminiscence of his friend, More mentions Babbitt's "almost Rabelaisian humour" not to be guessed at "from the reticences of his later manner." Judging from Nevin's book, it is still "not to be guessed at." But it is something of a relief to come across his amusing hyperboles and deflationary turns of phrase, as when he describes the French language he was obliged to teach as "a cheap and nasty substitute for Latin," or dryly sums up Emerson as a "true sage" but also one who

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"must be numbered among the sycophants of human nature." There is a touch of Mencken in him, more than he would have cared to admit; although he regarded Mencken as "an evil influence" on contemporary letters, he shared his scorn for charlatans, meddlers, pedagogues, and bohemians, and he cultivated a comparable polemical style.

Unlike Mencken, however, Babbitt was never frivolous or cynical, and spurned the role of entertainer. He demanded and expected more from his fellow Americans than Mencken did, and maintained a kind of cantankerous concern about their failed possibilities. The believer in "decorum" and the "inner check" lived uncomfortably in a society seemingly on perpetual moral vacation and indifferent, if not hostile, to its truth-tellers. Perhaps Babbitt didn't fit very well into this America, Nevin suggests, because "his premises and terms were outside the legacy of Judeo-Christian ethics: not sin but error of judgment was his bane." But the same thing might be said of Benjamin Franklin, the proto-Yankee. The Babbitt who steered a Puritan middle-way between enthusiasm and apathy and advocated a limited freedom, the practical commonsensical thinker disgusted by metaphysical speculation, was a Yankee, too. Such unwelcome men are likely to go unheard, but they speak to us with a special force in times when (to paraphrase Babbitt on Goethe) the unknowingly ignorant are in action and right knowledge remains inactive.

DANIEL AARON

Daniel Aaron, professor of English at Harvard University, is president of the Library of America.

THE DEPARTMENT OF RETALIATION

The Button: The Pentagon's Strategic Command and Control System—Does It Work? by Daniel Ford

(Simon and Schuster, 270 pp., $16.95)

The first purpose of the command and control system of America's nuclear arsenal is to ensure that the weapons would actually be launched if the president ordered a nuclear retaliatory strike against the Soviet Union. Without such a demonstrable capability, deterrence through the threat of nuclear retaliation would appear to be an incredible bluff and the missiles in their silos would be mere nuclear scarecrows. The second purpose of the command structure is to ensure that American nuclear weapons are never used *unless* the president orders such an attack. Without this ability to control nuclear forces, the danger of an accidental or unauthorized launch of a nuclear weapon would be unacceptably high.

It would be quite easy to design a command system that would guarantee that only one of these requirements was met. At one extreme, all the electronic safety locking devices that have been placed on American nuclear weapons could be controlled by a single coded "key" hidden in the black bag that is kept near the president at all times. Such a completely centralized structure of command would ensure that nuclear weapons were never used by accident, but would also guarantee that a single nuclear detonation in Washington would successfully, in the strategist's jargon, "decapitate" the United States, and leave the arsenal entirely unusable. At the other extreme, it would be possible to give every Minuteman missile launch control officer, every B-52 pilot, every strategic nuclear submarine captain the ability and authority to launch, by himself, the forces under his command. Such a remarkably decentralized system would certainly prevent "decapitation," but it would not protect us against nuclear accidents or actions taken by frightened or psychotic military commanders.

The precise details of the complex system of nuclear command and control that the United States government has built to achieve these dual requirements are, for obvious reasons, kept highly classified. Occasionally, however, a senior civilian or military authority will deliberately reveal important information on nuclear command and control, both to reassure the American public that nuclear accidents are unlikely and to assure the Soviet leadership that a nuclear attack on the United States would not result in a paralyzed American response. For example, some years ago photographs of Minuteman launch control centers were made public, to demonstrate that no single Air Force officer, even if he had the authority and proper codes, could launch a single missile by himself. More recently, the other half of the problem was stressed by former secretary of defense Harold Brown, who confirmed that "a submarine-launched missile could wipe out Washington with no more than ten minutes' warning, perhaps less," but strongly warned the Soviets that such an attack would not bring nuclear "victory." As Dr. Brown wrote in 1983:

> It is inappropriate to go into the details of the arrangements that we have made for such contingencies and to suggest to the Soviets how to get around those arrangements. But one criterion for such arrangements ought properly to be that such a decapitating attack should have the effect of making the response an all-out unrestrained one.

For many years this whole subject has received inadequate attention in both the scholarly and the popular literature on nuclear weapons policy. Daniel Ford, the former executive director of the Union of Concerned Scientists, in an effort to fill that gap, has written what is both a fascinating and an extremely misleading account of the American nuclear command and control system. The book (which was excerpted in *The New Yorker*) is fascinating because the author was given unusually full access to important individuals and military installations. It is misleading, however, because Ford seems determined, despite evidence to the contrary, to prove that the United States could not retaliate after a Soviet first strike and that, therefore, the American government must secretly be planning to strike first in a nuclear war.

First, the interesting portion of *The Button*. Numerous former civilian policymakers, dozens of low-ranking military officers in the Pentagon, and a

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whole galaxy of three- and four-star generals in the field were willing to be interviewed by Ford. Their appraisals of the vulnerabilities of the command and control system and their candid discussions of the difficulties of controlling the escalation of hostilities if deterrence fails deserve to be read carefully, by both those who think escalation is inevitable and those who think controlling escalation is easy. Ford was also permitted to visit many of the critical components of the command and control network. For example, as a hedge against surprise attack, the Strategic Air Command has kept a specially equipped EC-135 command-post aircraft, with a SAC general on board, in the air 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, since February 1961. Relatively few individuals have been able to tour one of these "Looking Glass" aircraft on its runway, and Ford's description of the plane and its duties is by far the most complete available. Similarly, the author was headquartered in Cheyenne Mountain, Colorado, and was allowed to tour a training version of a Minuteman launch-control center in Missouri where Air Force officers are taught how to launch their missiles if necessary. No expense appears to have been spared to ensure that Ford was given as comprehensive a picture of command and control problems as security concerns will permit.

IT IS all the more puzzling, therefore, that Ford appears to want to prove so badly that all the critical command and control centers in the United States could be easily destroyed by a clever Soviet first strike. Take SAC's "Looking Glass" command post. The plane flies at a cruising pattern anywhere from 26,000 to 40,000 feet in random patterns over the central United States, landing only when a replacement, taking off from Omaha or another air base, is airborne and operating. According to this account, the plane is highly vulnerable to a Soviet nuclear bolt out of the blue. Moscow could destroy the "Looking Glass" with a direct attack, Ford argues, (1) if a Soviet agent got access to an air traffic controller's radar screen, which might spot the plane, or (2) if the Soviet Union was able to use a spy satellite to pick up the plane's radio transmission, and (3) if once the location of the plane was discovered, intelligence information could get back to Moscow and be decoded and analyzed immediately, and (4) if, once the information was analyzed, the Soviets could send secret retargeting information to their submarines off the U.S. coast or to their missiles inside Soviet borders, and (5) if, once these messages were decoded, the missiles could be retargeted instantaneously and launched toward the United States, and (6) if then, finally, after the 15- to 30-minute flight time of the Soviet missiles, one of their warheads in a barrage attack could arrive on target and explode close enough to the aircraft to destroy it. Surely, these ifs add up. Indeed, there is enough uncertainty in this analysis to put even the Pentagon's worst worst-case analyst to shame.

WHAT IS most disturbing about *The Button*, however, is Ford's spectacular and wrongheaded conclusion, which will receive the most attention. The original purpose of his research, he says in his foreword, was to examine how the "button" was supposed to work and how well the United States, if attacked, would be able to retaliate. After studying the command and control system, however, he came to the startling conclusion that senior civilian and military leaders are lying to the American public when they say the nuclear forces are for retaliatory, not surprise attack, purposes. As he puts it, "the actual United States preparations for nuclear war attach only secondary importance to retaliation. The primary emergency plan . . . involves a massive first strike on key military targets in the Soviet Union." The United States military, according to Ford, "intends, if it has to fight at all, to strike first."

The only evidence offered to justify this extraordinary claim, however, is spurious at best. First, there is Ford's interpretation of leadership targeting. It has been public knowledge since at least 1980—when the Defense Department shared targeting information with the Senate Armed Services Committee—that the United States targets Soviet political and military leadership and their nuclear command and control system. This proves, according to Ford, that the United States plans to launch a surprise first strike on the Soviet Union since "there would not be much point in planning to disable their command system only *after* it had fulfilled its mission."

Wrong. In fact, there are at least three other reasons for targeting Soviet leadership and command and control. The primary one is to enhance deterrence by threatening what the Soviet leadership values most highly. It is essential that the United States ensures that no Soviet military planner can ever tell the Politburo that, if they strike first, there is a plausible chance of victory in a nuclear war. To the degree that Soviet leaders believe that full-scale nuclear retaliation would destroy their own lives and their ability to control Soviet society and manage its painful reconstruction, the chance of achieving even the most Pyrrhic sort of victory would appear hopeless and absurd. The second reason to target Soviet leadership is more moral in nature. It would make no sense at all to attack the Soviet leadership in any sort of limited nuclear war; this would make a negotiated cease-fire and end to such a war, which must already be doubtful, absolutely impossible. In response to a full Soviet first strike, however, the grisly retribution of nuclear retaliation would certainly be more appropriately leveled upon the individuals who began the war, to the degree possible, rather than upon innocent civilians in Soviet cities. Finally, destroying Soviet command and control in response to a major first strike would still serve the military purpose of decreasing the likelihood of further coordinated Soviet nuclear attacks on the United States and its allies.

THE SECOND argument used to support Ford's claim that the United States plans to launch a nuclear first strike is his exaggerated view of the vulnerability of U.S. command and control, so extreme a view that a second-strike strategy appears to be simply impossible. There must be a sinister reason for such vulnerability. As Ford puts it, "A command system unready to deliver orders for retaliation but streamlined to convey commands for a strike unmistakably suggests the basic intent of its designers."

Wrong. It is no secret that the U.S. command and control network is more vulnerable to attack than it should be. But this vulnerability is not due to willful neglect; it is due to the fact that nuclear weapons are horrendously destructive. The Department of Defense spent at least two billion dollars in 1984, and will spend that much again in 1985, upgrading strategic warning systems, protecting communications equipment against the effects of nuclear explo-

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sions, and providing redundant command systems. Spending this much to improve the survivability of nuclear command and control is both a demonstration that the problem is recognized and a measure of the difficulty of the task. It can hardly be seen as a symbol of neglect or sinister intent.

Finally, Ford was able to find a number of military officers who were willing to state—sometimes bluntly off-the-record, sometimes more elliptically on-the-record—that there is a military advantage to striking first in a nuclear war. Such statements, however, are perhaps somewhat less shocking if put into broader context. Precisely because these weapons are so destructive, striking first in a nuclear exchange is better than being struck first. But either condition is infinitely worse than avoiding a nuclear war altogether. Any advantage that may accrue to the side that strikes first simply pales next to the advantages of remaining at nuclear peace. It is highly unlikely that any of the particular American military officers quoted by Ford, despite their occasional stark language, believe otherwise. Nor, I suspect, do many Soviet military officers have any doubt about the absolute horror of nuclear war, despite the chilling and bellicose quality of so much of their professional writings.

Much of the academic debate on nuclear weapons policy takes place on an excessively abstract plane, where the pristine logic of the theory of deterrence too easily ignores the imperfections—the frictions, as Clausewitz called them—that make military operations in the real world so different from those on paper. A broader and deeper understanding of nuclear command and control problems certainly can help make the scholarly literature on issues such as surprise attack, escalation control, and war termination more useful for the making of policy. It can also improve the quality of the public debate on nuclear weapons more generally, by encouraging more realistic appraisals of arms control proposals to reduce the risks of accidental war and to build confidence in crises with the Soviets. The public debate in a democracy, however, is most productive when it is both vigorous and well-informed. Unfortunately, the contribution of *The Button*, with its conspiratorial conclusions, will most likely be to make the public debate a bit more vigorous, but also a bit less well-informed.

SCOTT D. SAGAN

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CHILD ABUSE

Once Upon A Time by Gloria Vanderbilt

(Knopf, 320 pp., $16.95)

For young kids who think Gloria Vanderbilt is a maker of jeans, and old kids who remember her as the prize in a custody war, her first autobiographical offering may be of interest. This book is certainly not about jeans, and only a little bit about genes. It is, instead, an unusual look at America's big rich and a way of life that is long gone. It is also a child's-eye view of trouble and sadness.

Appropriately titled *Once Upon A Time*, Gloria Vanderbilt's memoir of her first 17 years employs the lexicon of fairy tales. People live in "castles" and are "banished" from "kingdoms" across "moats." Just as "Snow White" is populated with characters named Sleepy and Dopey, so Vanderbilt's people are called The Little Countess, Tweedle Crocker, Tweedle Dunnington, and Fish-Face. (These last three are two laywers and a doctor.) The servants have unusual names as well: Big Dodo Elephant, Tootsie Eleanor, and Dumpling Nanny.

It was Big Dodo Elephant and The Little Countess who were central to Little Gloria's young life. Her nurse and maternal grandmother, respectively, they were her emotional security—in essence, her real family. She called the two women and herself "The Caravan." The concept was a state of mind as well as an entity.

The reason Grandmother Morgan (the Countess) and the nurse (Big Elephant) were her nearest and dearest is that there was "no father anywhere reachable, and Mother . . . was always coming in and then going out—mostly going out." Gloria's was not a cozy, secure childhood. Her father, Reginald Vanderbilt, never particularly an overachiever, was a 60-ish alcoholic playboy when she was born. He died within two years. Her mother was a beautiful young party girl, not the milk-and-cookies type. "My mother," she writes, "was 19 years old and in New York City the night my father died. She was at the theatre with Mr. March, described to me later as a friend of the family. . . . Soon after my father died, my mother moved with me to Paris." It was 1926. It was also the beginning of rented houses and hotel suites, with Gloria sometimes in one and her mother in the other. She was never able to get close to her mother, either physically or emotionally. It is this combination of rejection and loss to which the entire book speaks.

One discouraging message of this memoir seems to be that no one who is financially well-fixed relates well to children. The woman who "won" Gloria in the custody suit was her father's sister, "Auntie Ger" (Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney). She meant well, perhaps, but installed the youngster in the late Mr. Whitney's bedroom, complete with gentleman's fittings and horse prints, and never changed a thing. To communicate with "Auntie Ger," who was often in another residence, Gloria found it expedient to send messages with servants, friends, and lawyers—The Tweedles, in this case.

Just as Gloria was passed over to Mrs. Whitney, her beloved Big Dodo Elephant was dismissed by the court, and then, of course, began the parade of the Mademoiselles. At the loss of her nurturer, young Gloria decides that she lives in "a country . . . called Pain." She also lives in a world where the furniture is first-rate but the people are not up to par. Most menacing of all are the maternal aunts. Her mother's twin sister, Thelma, Lady Furness, alias "Toto," has no use for Little Gloria and feels competitive with her in the bargain. Then there is their older sister, Consuelo, a real bitch who seldom speaks to the little girl except to ask, when she's in her chubby phase, "How

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much do you weigh?" The cast of unfortunate characters goes on and on. There is the pediatrician who apparently likes kiddie porn, and an older cousin who chains his daughter to a tree. As for Gloria's grandmothers, The Little Countess (Naney Morgan) sounds batty. "When it came to screaming, there was nothing more terrible to hear than the sounds Naney Morgan made as she wrung her hands together and ran around the room hitting her head against the walls like a trapped bird." And this was the person who provided stability!

The other grandma—Vanderbilt—is seldom seen, but on one visit things go like this:

> She does not know Paddy. She does not know twins Anne and Elsie—unknown children, unknown. She does not know me. She is my grandmother, but she doesn't know me, and if she doesn't know me, who am I? who am I? who am I? Someone comes and my Grandma turns and goes back up the long stairs of red, away away away away, back up into the sky. Come, children, someone else says. It's time to go home. Grandma is tired.

Grandma is also senile. And then there are the bit players, people with whom Little Gloria spends an hour, or a day: Maurice Chevalier, Rudolph Valentino, The Prince of Wales, Maureen O'Sullivan, Maria Montez, and Joan Crawford. (The mother couldn't bake cookies, but she did know how to take the Super Chief to Los Angeles and do the social scene as Mrs. Reginald Vanderbilt.)

GLORIA weathered one storm after another. During the custody proceedings, she faced hundreds of onlookers who rushed her car, and countless banners offering advice: "Gloria, Stick to Your Ma!" While swimming in Monte Carlo, Big Elephant and The Countess warned her not to go into the ocean with Uncle Harry (her mother's brother) because she "might never come back." (There was money at stake here, of course.) She also heard, in gauzy hints, about a possible kidnap plan whereby "Mr. Hearst" would fly Gloria and her mother to Canada, out of the court's jurisdiction, and then write about it in his newspapers. And at age 13 she learned—from the Tweedles, of course—that she had a half sister! In 13 years no one had thought to tell this family-hungry girl that she had another blood relative. This news understandably offered a moment of hope: a half sister was better than none at all.

This story is absolutely, inarguably, and overwhelmingly sad. You'd have to have a heart the size of a navy bean not to be moved. That this girl grew up to be a functional—never mind productive—person is a tribute to forces for which I know no name. *Once Upon A Time* is an honest and affecting story of a derailed childhood, miraculously related without bitterness or anger.

VANDERBILT displays some peculiar tics, however, in telling the story. For one thing, there is a promiscuous use of capital letters. Her father lives in Heaven, Gertrude in a Palace. She herself has a Doll House and is an Only Child. Sometimes I think she was substituting capital letters for quotation marks: "No one would be there except the Kindly Judge." The author also seems to be on the outs with certain kinds of punctuation. For example, a lot of people speak directly in this book, yet not one of them does so within quotation marks. This omission demands extra attention from the reader. You can get through an entire passage when all of a sudden you realize you are not watching Gloria's imagination at work, or even hearing her narrative voice; it's . . . Big Dodo Elephant or Fish-Face talking.

Vanderbilt is not crazy about commas, either, and every now and then she displays a strained relationship with verbs, finding it expedient to just leave them out. Now, I can live without verbs as well as the next person, but I did start to feel crazed when the author hit her stride with repetitions. I think it would be unkind to dish up examples, so please refer to the excerpt above, regarding Grandma Vanderbilt, and take my word for it that purposeless repetitions appear with depressing regularity.

The key to Vanderbilt's approach is that all the insights are passed on to us in a child's voice. This is enlightening—for a while—but if God had wanted children to write books, he would have given them all typewriters. Toward the end, when she is recounting her teenage years, you long for a more mature interpretation of events, some retrospective understanding, some acknowledgment that she is writing from now and not from then.

The problem may be that Gloria Vanderbilt is not a writer, she is a feeler. Yet her story and the authenticity of her look backward allow her to transcend stylistic difficulties. In the tradition of the naïf, she is able to create suspense and communicate feelings. And her memory is spectacular; she can describe dogs, clothing, furniture, and food from 50 years ago. This is an eccentric book, but genuinely so. There is no effort to be quirky. And at the end, when Gloria's mother delivers her last, thoughtless rejection, it is wrenching. Come to think of it, so is the whole sorry story.

MARGO HOWARD

Margo Howard is the author of *Eppie: The Story of Ann Landers* (Putnam).

CORRESPONDENCE, *from page 6*

deed making progress on the direct mail front, which was acknowledged high up in the piece, though not detailed until paragraph 40. I'll concede that more of that good news deserved emphasis. My point, however, was that the system as a whole works against such efforts, and pushes the party into the arms of brokers like . . . Robert Strauss.

Mr. Strauss may have used the McGovern list, but it is no secret that he thought little of direct mail, and that the national party made no serious, systematic direct mail effort during the Strauss era. Mr. Strauss may have made his first million before becoming a power broker, but there are lots of proficient law firms in Washington that didn't grow as exponentially as Akin, Gump. His own career, as he suggests, indeed served his family well. It epitomizes the politics/fund-raising/corporate-lawyering nexus that so muddles the Democratic Party's identity.

BATTLE OF WILL

To the editors:

The recent column by Charles Krauthammer (Washington Diarist, April 22) is intellectually misinformed and personally disoriented. He went after three philistines for attacking George Will, who has brought Edmund Burke to America. *National Review* was listed as the third of the ignorant, ungrateful malefactors. Permit me to say that before so categorically handling us, a critic should read his material more carefully than C.K. did.

The article by Charles Kesler (*National*

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Review, March 22) that C.K. goes after is scholarly and not compressible. Mr. Krauthammer wrote, "Then, the heart of the argument [Kesler's indictment of Will]: insufficient reverence for our basic political arrangements. Will is critical of the Founders' devotion to individual liberty at the expense of individual virtue. Bad, says *National Review*."

Kesler's point is that the Founding Fathers in fact had something to say about the paradigmatic life, something that goes beyond capitalist arrangements or the separation of powers. He quoted from Publius, to the effect that the delegates to the Constitutional Convention were the doctors to the people's political health, "and the prudent inquiry, i.e., the inquiry of prudence, is said to be 'in all cases . . . not so much *from whom* the advice comes, as whether the advice be *good*.' " Kesler adds, "This is, I think, about as much as could be asked for in a political statement of wisdom's claim to rule." That position is at odds with settled opinion about the amorality of our constitutional provenance, opinion held by some, though by no means all, Straussians, and by George Will. To pass the whole thing off as nothing more than an exercise in Will-derogation undermines the gravity of an important exchange.

WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.
New York, New York

Charles Krauthammer responds:
Mr. Buckley is not the first to be piqued at the notion that Will "brought Burke to America." I have received another written complaint by a Tory who thinks he deserves the honor. My point is that while Kirk (and later Buckley and others) discovered Burke, it is Will who has brought that sensibility to every newspaper and living room in the country.

Mr. Buckley seems further miffed at the insufficent reverence I accord Kesler's critique. Yet for a critique so incompressible, Mr. Buckley did a fine job on the cover of *National Review*, where he announced the piece as "Is Conservatism Un-American?" That Kesler should answer yes in regard to Will's conservatism, and consider that an indictment, seemed to me a peculiar, and an impoverished, form of attack. It is Will's foreignness that animates Kesler's piece and that was the subject of mine—and not the elaborate brief, rehashed by Buckley, that Will holds an allegedly deviationist reading of the Federalist Papers.

THE NEW REPUBLIC'S BEST BOOKS

Following is a list of books TNR *has recently reviewed and recommends.*

The Heavens and the Earth: A Political History of the Space Age by Walter A. McDougall (Basic). The story of the state, the scientists, and the exploitation of the galaxy. (Reviewed 6/3/85)

Women and Angels by Harold Brodkey (The Jewish Publication Society of America). Two ordinary fragments of a long-awaited novel, and a third remarkable one: the portrait of a revelation. (5/20/85)

Acts of Will: The Life and Work of Otto Rank by E. James Lieberman M.D. (Free Press). Another chapter in the history of psychoanalysis. (5/20/85)

Money: A Suicide Note by Martin Amis (Viking). The manic monologue of a man who has everything but is nothing. (5/6/85)

Mountbatten: A Biography by Philip Ziegler (Knopf). The aristocrat as ambitious, accomplished statesman. (5/13/85)

The Call: An American Missionary in China by John Hersey (Knopf). An unsentimental saga of one Christian's half-century in China. (5/13/85)

The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict: Making America's Middle East Policy, from Truman to Reagan by Steven L. Spiegel (University of Chicago Press). An exhaustive, objective map of the maneuvers and muddles. (5/13/85)

Shah of Shahs by Ryszard Kapuściński, translated by William R. Brand and Katarzyna Mroczkowska-Brand (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich). A tale of tyranny, set in Iran. (4/8/85)

The Kindness of Strangers: The Life of Tennessee Williams by Donald Spoto (Little, Brown). A thorough life of the carousing playwright. (5/13/85)

Home Truths: Sixteen Stories by Mavis Gallant (Random House). Portraits of Canadians at home and abroad. (5/13/85)

TRB, *from page 4*

exist, above all, to be reviewed. These aren't novels, written for the ages. These books are written for esteem, money, and policy influence. All those good things derive from the reviews far more than from the book itself.

A tree may fall in the forest and be turned into *The Blood of Abraham* by Jimmy Carter (number six on a recent *Washington Post* best-seller list), but a book like this "happens" as a consequence of the reviews. A review in even a small magazine like this one reaches more people than all but the most successful serious nonfiction book. (TNR's circulation is 95,000. *Deadly Gambits* sold 25,000.) Reviews (if favorable) are what feed the author's self-esteem and create sales. It's also overwhelmingly through reviews, not the book itself, that the author's revelations or ideas reach her intended audience—including most of those who actually buy the book.

Why do authors bother? As a magazine editor, I often beg journalists who contemplate spending a year or two writing a book on some worthwhile or even important subject to save themselves the agony, cut out the middleman, and just write the review.

The more you think about books, the more pointless they seem. Consider the memoirs of Carter's predecessor, Gerald Ford, which were the subject of a Supreme Court ruling last month. Harper & Row paid Ford some gargantuan sum and Ford dutifully produced 200,000 words, which Harper published as *A Time to Heal*. *Time* magazine bought the right to run a 7,500-word prepublication excerpt, but before it could do so *The Nation* obtained a copy of the manuscript and ran a summary of the best parts, such as they were. *Time* pulled out of the deal and Harper sued *The Nation*, arguing that the 2,250-word summary vitiated the value of *Time*'s 7,500-word excerpt, to say nothing of the 200,000-word book. After years of litigation, the Supreme Court ruled for Harper, emphasizing the crucial importance of just *300 words* of direct quotation.

Far be it from me to suggest that all the wisdom to be derived from Jeane Kirkpatrick's United Nations memoirs, for which Simon and Schuster recently paid a reported $900,000, could be summarized in just 300 words. But as for the memoirs of Geraldine Ferraro and James Watt, both due out this fall—well, I look forward to the reviews.

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SAN FRANCISCO DIARIST

Speed Reading

"VOYEZ-VOUS Stephen King? C'est lui?" Those were the first words I heard in San Francisco's Moscone Center, where the American Booksellers Association was assembled for its annual convention. They captured perfectly the sophisticated interest in vulgarity that characterizes most of American publishing. My first morning's foray into the fair swiftly established that what we mean by books, dear readers, is just a small part of what the book business means by books. American publishing is becoming another communications industry. That is not only for the obvious reasons, such as the offensive appropriations of the prestige of the written word by all the movie monitors and video screens with which the room was riddled, but more profoundly because the written word has come to be understood by most of its marketers merely as the transmission of a message. The problem for which American publishing must find a solution is that, by comparison with the other media of American culture, the transmission is slow. Thus the industry desperately seeks formulas for speed, for freeing the reader from work and the writer from those features of his profession that distinguish it from television. Ambling around the ABA, I had the sense that half of those in attendance had come to humiliate the other half. The humiliated half was composed of all the small publishers and booksellers (and the sprinkling of "serious" editors and executives from the corporate houses) whose survival in this business is a kind of mathematical miracle. Many of them must have spent more money than they have to set up shop in the lengthening shadows of the ABA TV screens.

LIKE ANY TRADE FAIR, the ABA had a narrow focus. (The most priceless moment of the weekend came at a posh Pacific Heights party, at which a publisher introduced himself to Shirley MacLaine with the words, "How do you do, you're with the Bodley Head, aren't you?") I learned that the ABA is the third largest trade fair in America. The fact startled me and lifted my spirits. For it is likewise a fact that publishing is hardly the third most profitable trade in America. Taken together, these facts mean that a majority of the people in the business of books are not in it only for the money. There are not many businesses of which that may be said. The indifference of many of these businessmen and businesswomen to economic rationality is in some measure a tribute to the higher value of their product. I cannot imagine anybody going into television not for the money.

AMONG THE REAMS of reading matter with which I returned to my hotel was the *London Review of Books*, from which I expected some refreshment. Instead, I found in the lead article of its May 2 issue still further evidence of the new intellectual respectability of anti-Semitism in England. A review essay by Alan Milward, with whose writing I am otherwise unfamiliar, described the intensity of the academic interests in the Holocaust as "one of those raves of intellectual hysteria which betray the yearning for conformity among American historians." In truth, according to the author, the study of the Holocaust is not "a uniquely instructive branch of history." The Jews, moreover, led by an overly obsessive Lucy Dawidowicz, are distorting the interpretation of the Holocaust by the nature of their interest in it. "All this [is] mainly a fuss about the nature of American society. . . . [But] the massacre is first and foremost a problem in German history." Anti-Semitism, moreover, was "a force, [but] not one of the strongest ones" in Nazi Germany. What exercises the author most about the Nazi system of extermination is the possibility, based on his ridiculous analysis of the American and British political systems, that "it can happen here."

IMPATIENCE WITH Jewish suffering is an old editorial principle at the *London Review*, as readers of Ian Gilmour's screeds, among others, will recall. (Anti-Zionism may not be anti-Semitism, but anti-Semitism is anti-Semitism.) But the impatience seems to be widespread in English literary life. For example, D. M. Thomas recently confessed in *The Washington Post* "Book World" to a feeling of "uneasiness" about Elie Wiesel's Jewishness, thus furnishing final proof that he does not understand the subject of the novel that made him famous. And in *The Spectator* a few weeks ago Peregrine Worsthorne coarsely accused the Jews of "every devious trick of moral blackmail" in their opposition to the Bitburg visit, and more generally of putting their interests ahead of the interests of the free world, thus providing a timely reminder for the righteous of the American right that a feeling for the free world and an insulting attitude toward the Jews are not incompatible. Naturally, Worsthorne claims to be "a philo-Semite." I promise to keep clipping. Meanwhile I offer solace in the general powerlessness of English prejudice in the postwar world.

I HAVE BEEN EXPOSED to an interesting interference of politics with culture this weekend. It concerns Paul Schrader's *Mishima*, an American film about the mystical, muscular Japanese writer, which the Japanese are refusing to see. All kinds of lofty and legal reasons have been adduced for the Japanese refusal to have a look at probably the most important Japanese-American cultural collaboration in recent years. In fact, there may be a good old-fashioned political reason for the Japanese boycott. It turns out that the Japanese minister of defense who permitted Mishima to create his private army and to make use of Japanese military installations for its training was none other than Yasuhiro Nakasone, who is now the prime minister. As Henry Scott Stokes (who has accused the film of borrowing materials from his biography of Mishima) has speculated in *Le Monde*, the logic for censorship at the highest levels is plain. So much for the Westernization of Japan. It turns out that it takes more than technology and cultural mimicry to turn a closed society into an open one.

L.W.

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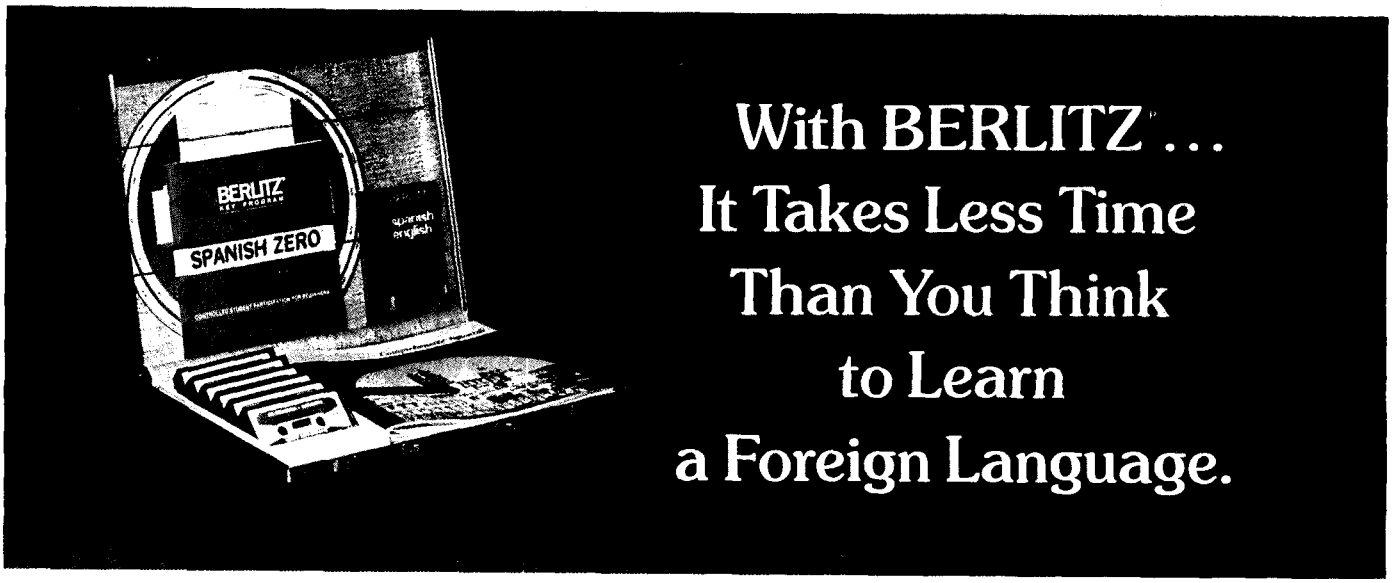

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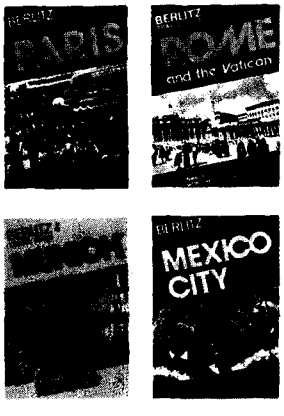

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